

Fourth meeting of the Hurunui Science Stakeholders Group.

Wednesday 30 November 2016. St Johns Hall. Amberley

Attendees:

- Environment Canterbury: Ian Whitehouse, Ned Norton (consultant technical lead), Mike Bennett and Lisa Jenkins.
- Zone Committee: John Faulkner, Michele Hawke, James McCone, James Costello and Cynthia Roberts
- Ravensdown: Kelly Morris
- Balance: Rebecca Hyde
- Whitewater NZ: Doug Rankin
- Amuri Irrigation (AIC): Alastair Rutherford, Andrew Barton
- Cheviot Irrigators Group: Robb Macbeth
- Beef and Lamb NZ: Julia Beijeman
- Federated Farmers: Lionel Hume
- Fish and Game NZ: Scott Pearson
- Fonterra: Sue Ruston
- Hurunui Water Project (HWP): Alex Adams

Background

The Hurunui Waiiau Zone Committee, with Environment Canterbury, is starting the development of a long-term water management solutions package for the zone – “Healthy rivers – productive land”. This includes review of the planning framework. As part of the solutions package, a new plan framework will be notified in mid-2019.

To assist this process, the Zone Committee wants widespread buy-in on the technical information, models and assessment results, thereby improving the focus on the value judgements needed and lessening the contest over technical matters in the RMA Hearing on the plan change. To achieve this, a Science Stakeholder Group has been established. This meeting is the fourth meeting of that group. The agenda for the meeting was:

1. Welcome and introductions.
2. Opportunities to correct any significant errors with the notes of the third meeting.
3. Peer Review Group – discussion of areas of expertise required and indicate people who could be on the Peer Review Group (make recommendation on membership?) – see material below from Terms of Reference and suggested names
4. Identification of additional monitoring data or investigations relating to water quality and land use in Hurunui River catchment.
5. Website for sharing information
6. For your information –Next meetings

What was discussed?

Notes from last meeting

With regard to the notes from the third meeting, Robb Macbeth indicated that the slide showing nitrate trends in Parnassus does not recognise that the well in question is likely effected by a local point source discharge and is therefore not indicative of groundwater nitrate trends in the area. Whit and Ned agreed to remove the slide from the public presentation.

Peer review group

Whit introduced the concept of the Peer Review Group. The key function of this group is to ensure that technical information is fit for purpose and of a high standard. Ned noted we are blending and integrating a large amount of diverse information and need people who understand this and can look at information from a range of technical fields and how it relates together.

It is expected the Peer Review Group would have experience in collaborative multidisciplinary science processes generally, and include particular expertise on.

- Ecosystem health/periphyton and factors that impact on ecosystem health.
- Farm systems and nutrient losses.
- The interaction between groundwater and surface water systems.

The members need to be collaborative in terms of being able to accommodate and listen to experts in disciplines and areas besides their own.

In response to query from Cynthia Roberts, Ned noted there will be a much bigger team than just these three, noting this is simply a peer review group for the technical reports and information which will be produced.

Doug Rankin asked for a summary of the reports that will be produced, what they will cover, scope etc, at this stage so that the group knows where things are going and doesn't miss anything, and knows what kind of questions they will need to ask and when. Otherwise he fears getting into a process where there is critical information that is not covered off because we did not anticipate it.

Cynthia Roberts asked if there is someone in the technical team who can provide an overview of a bigger picture ecosystem approach including impacts on terrestrial ecology? There will be, with the technical team comprising 10-15 people covering a wide range of expertise.

Lionel Hume commented on where the boundaries are with these things – this is a process about land use and water quality. The scope is endless if we go too much beyond that, there is also potential overlap with the District Plan Process.

Andrew Barton asked if the peer review group would act like a hearing panel who would make an overall judgement together, or if they would kind of do this in isolation. Ned said the peer reviewers could not be coming from an isolated technical perspective (there will be specialised technical expertise in the three "topic" area on the team anyway). This is really about how things tie in at a higher level to develop a technical understanding of how that catchment works and to peer review this conceptual framework. It is a conceptual flow

through from land – through to transport – and into the river how that creates a response in terms of values.

Whit closed off – Cynthia has identified a gap in terms of terrestrial ecology – freshwater ecologists will be focussed on what is in the stream. Do we need more than three peer reviewers?

There will be a land and water solutions package for the zone, which will be developed into rules, but there may be a number of things that we want to see happening as well.

James McCone stated he is not convinced that terrestrial ecology is core enough to be covered off in terms of this peer review. He would be comfortable if there was someone from Ned's team with skills to look at terrestrial ecology, but does not think it should be elevated to the peer review team.

Whit said that as well as rules and limits the process needed to think about how can we get other gains, mahinga kai, terrestrial ecology, and so on which we are struggling to get in other ways.

Ned said he is comfortable having a terrestrial ecologist on technical team or peer review team, but we need to think about where we stop.

John Faulkner shared James McCone's concerns about scope, but also acknowledged the need to make sure biodiversity is sufficiently covered off.

Cynthia Roberts said that expertise on birds also very important. It is sometimes easy to miss the benefits of a holistic approach, the ability to look at everything at the same time, and a terrestrial ecologist will be able to bring these. It was noted that Ken Hughey, a zone committee member, had provided technical expertise on braided river birds in the development of the Hurunui Plan.

Sue Rushton asked if there is a high level road map key research questions or key pieces of technical information/pieces of. Ned stated there is a chicken and egg issue, because if we want to make sure it is developed in collaboration with the SSG.

[Discussed possible members – not recorded as conversation was necessarily free and frank. A short list was developed who Ned will contact]

Sharing of information

Monitoring data, including data provided by group members, will be made available of SharePoint. A link to this site will be circulated by ECan.

Scott Pearson asked if there are timeframes for getting information. Whit said working backwards from when we want to notify the plan – mid 2019 about 18 months from now will be the maximum time for information to be useful to the process, but there are diminishing returns the closer you go to this date. In other words the sooner information can be made available the better.

Scott said that there is some information Fish and Game may be able to provide within the next 12-18 months including:

- Info on ecosystem health and indicators
- Cynobacteria
- An assessment of data and reports that have been done
- Angler surveys (probably after Christmas)

James McCone mentioned that the independent irrigators did some monitoring on the north side of the Waiau this will be folded into AIC's Waiau data.

James Costello said there was an article about N leaching on hill country and it is lower than previously assumed. The article talks about greenhouse gas emissions and can be found at

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/agribusiness/86767665/hill-country-farming-produces-fewer-emissions-than-previously-thought>

Ned told the group we are also following up on the pointers given at the third meeting (e.g. Meridian monitoring data).

The meeting concluded.