

Overview of THE ORARI RIVER PROTECTION GROUP (ORPG)

- **ORPG has been active for 17 years** since starting in response to a dam proposal on the Orari in 2003. We rallied community support and succeeded in stopping the dam.
- We succeeded in getting the **Orari gorge recognised as an Area of High Naturalness in 2011** by Environment Canterbury as part of their Land & Water Plan, due to its clean water, outstanding native vegetation & biodiversity in the gorge.
- We worked with the community and other organisations to **develop the Orari River Integrated Catchment Management Plan (ICMP) in 2008**.
- **Representation on the ECan Water Zone committee in our region from 2008 - 2018**, but the ICMP has not been in active use.
- **Bio-diversity protection work in the gorge**: 5 years of manual weed control & helicopter work with our funding partner Environment Canterbury. More than 1100 manual hours in the last 4 years. Protecting rare native plants including pink broom.
- We've been **trapping predators for 9 years**, to protect the endangered wildlife on the river: 4 rare lizard species and native forest birds in the gorge.
- **Bird Colony Protection** – We scout & survey the river to locate breeding colonies of endangered Black-fronted Terns & threatened Black-billed Gulls, Pied Stilts & Dotterels. We conduct observations every week & maintain additional trap-lines around colonies.
- Goal to make the **Orari River predator-free**, engaging with more land-holders along the river and maintaining 4 trap-lines currently covering approx 5kms along the river.
- We do **quarterly water testing**, with water in the gorge showing a Level 1 NIWA category, but deteriorated water quality in the lower river.
- We **collaborate with DOC, LINZ, BRAID, ECan and other catchment groups**, land-holders & community members in our work protecting the river. We also work with **local contractors** Hobbs & Banks, and Rooneys earthmoving in endangered bird colony protection.
- We engage with the community as a whole to hold events and fun days on the river.
- We have been successful in obtaining grants from several organisations for our activities.
- We continue to **advocate for a healthy river**, but **downstream the Orari river is degraded, with water quality and quantity heavily impacted by high nitrates & over-allocation**.
- ORPG currently has **41 members**.
- **Our objectives are:**

1. To retain the gorge in its free-flowing state
2. To retain the integrity of the river hydrology
3. To sustain, protect & enhance the natural character and ecological values of the Orari River catchment for present & future generations.
4. To maintain public access to the Orari River as an educational and recreational resource
5. To advocate for greater protection of the upper Orari River & catchment in District & Regional Plans
6. To recognise the potential for over-allocation & advocate for the use of the Orari River Catchment Management Strategy.

ORPG film link: <https://youtu.be/HvyTNPZHczc>