

23 June 2006
For immediate release



One of Canterbury's largest resource consent applications ever is publicly notified

Today (June 24) the proposed Central Plains Water enhancement scheme achieved a major step forward with the public notification of its resource consent applications to Environment Canterbury to take, use and discharge water.

This is one of the largest resource consent applications ever to be publicly notified in Canterbury.

Environment Canterbury is satisfied that Central Plains Water's application contains sufficient information for potentially affected people to be able to make submissions for or against the scheme.

Resource consents for the Central Plains Water scheme will be publicly notified today (24 June) in a multi-page advertisement in Christchurch's major newspapers.

The consents are for taking water from the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers to irrigate approximately 60,000ha of land on the Central Canterbury Plains.

Central Plains Water has applied to Environment Canterbury for nearly 50 resource consents on its own behalf, and one consent application in conjunction with the Ashburton Community Water Trust (ACWT). The latter relates to ACWT's shared usage of the Rakaia River water take.

As well as water intakes at various points along the rivers' banks, the \$350 million scheme also requires consents to build a 12 sq km storage lake in the Waianiwi Valley, 77 kms of headrace canals and tunnels and a network of water race channels criss-crossing the plains from the Malvern Hills to State Highway 1.

Overall the scheme must obtain close to 80 resource consents, natural resource related consents from Environment Canterbury and land use related consents from Selwyn District Council. The land use applications were lodged with Selwyn District Council on June 12 and are expected to be publicly notified in four to six weeks.

Selwyn District Council and Environment Canterbury will appoint independent commissioners to hear the applications. The commissioners will decide whether or not resource consents and designations should be granted and, if so, what terms and conditions will apply to them. The joint hearing is expected to be scheduled before the end of the year.

"The resource management process is rigorous and transparent and any interested party can make submissions for or against our applications," says Central Plains Water chairman Pat Morrison.

On Thursday night at a Central Plains Water shareholder meeting, the company unveiled to over 150 shareholders the potential recreational benefits the scheme could bring to Canterbury.

Shareholders were told the scheme's vision is to incorporate recreational facilities that cater for a wide range of activities into the proposed scheme's ultimate design and operation. These facilities will turn Central Canterbury into a major recreational destination which would have significant benefits to the communities in the area. They would also bolster Canterbury's reputation as being the gateway to the Southern Alps, creating recreational opportunities for local residents and visitors to the area.

The scheme is proposing an Environmental Trust Fund that will be used to support and encourage various environmental enhancement initiatives, for example riparian planting and habitat restoration within and 'downstream' of the scheme area. The scheme plans to partner with local communities to identify areas that will benefit from the Fund.

There will also be significant economic benefits to Christchurch and Canterbury if the scheme goes ahead. The scheme's contribution to GDP will be the equivalent of a Rugby World Cup every year. Canterbury farmers spend around \$750 million annually on goods and services provided by Christchurch businesses. Export income from Canterbury's rural sector accounts directly and indirectly for 60-70% of Christchurch's economic activity.

"This scheme is important to Canterbury. If the Central Plains scheme does not go ahead, surface water will continue to be allocated from the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers to individual farmers or small groups of farmers (up to the allowable flow levels established by their respective National Water Conservation Order and Regional River Plan).

"Our scheme offers an alternative to this status quo where, in addition to providing irrigation water, it will provide a range of environmental and recreational benefits that can only be delivered by a large scale, centrally managed, community scheme," says Pat Morrison.

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