

Working for Opihi Water

PROJECT SUCCESSES

The NZ Landcare Trust facilitated Working for Opihi Water project draws to a close at the end of June 2017. This presents an ideal opportunity to reflect on three years working alongside the local community, identifying the successes and continuing challenges. Many of these are common themes, reflected in other community projects around the country.

The Project

The Zone Committee for the Orari-Temuka-Opihi-Pareora zone represents a cross section of interests. It was the original steering group for the project, supported the work and saw the benefit in establishing a network of catchment groups to share information and increase adoption of Good Management Practices.

ECan identified the key parameters for the groups as:

“Improving water quality and water quantity in rivers, enhance and manage biodiversity, and increase adoption of good management practices”.



South Canterbury, July 2016



Riparian field day, March 2016

Catchment Groups

A community led approach to achieving local water management goals

Eight catchment groups were established across the zone drawing landowners and their communities together to identify issues, and enable information and knowledge sharing on issues relevant to improving water quality and water quantity in the zone. This will also enable communities to have an input in to the development of the Healthy Catchments Project. Although these groups have been established at different times there are important ongoing discussions which are resulting in increased understanding of different view points and increased awareness of the need for input into the development of regulatory plans and identifying opportunities for communities to work together to improve water quality. Each group decides its own programme of activity and priorities, guided by the capacity and time of its facilitator and chairperson.

Roles

- Information distributors to and from the community
- Provide information to ECan on community priorities
- Social meeting points, providing a good context for community-based learning
- Responding collaboratively to local need and opportunity
- Become 'champions' or 'celebrators' of local catchments
- A reference contact point for the Zone Committee

Catchment groups have initiated a range of activities including water quality monitoring in their local streams, identifying sources of contaminant loss to streams and working together to identify options for improvement, promoting Farm Environment Plan workshops, sharing information on irrigation and wintering practices and hosting a number of field days.



Farm Environment Plan workshop, November 2016

Acknowledgements

Facilitators

This was the first project where we have used industry facilitators for the catchment groups which have worked very well. These are well respected and excellent facilitators in their own roles who have brought their skills, understanding of rural communities and provided a lot of time to help set up and facilitate the groups, and who are willing to continue in these roles. I would also like to acknowledge the businesses these people work for and whom have supported them in undertaking these roles. ECan has also funded Rhys Taylor part time as a facilitator for a number of groups.

A big thanks to the following:

Facilitator	Business	Catchment Group
Nicki Pridham	Rabobank	Lower Opihi
Sue Ruston	Fonterra	Orari-Rangitata
Martin O'Connor	Ravensdown	Kakahu
Julia Crossman	Opuha Water	Opuha
Caleb Strowger	DairyNZ	Upper Opihi
Angela Darke	Ballance AgriNutrients	Pareora
Rhys Taylor	ECan	TeNgawai, Waihi-Temuka, Orari-Rangitata

Since Caleb Strowger has left DairyNZ the Upper Opihi and Opuha groups have combined under the facilitation of Julia Crossman but they have retained the 2 chairmen.

Catchment Group Members

The majority of present catchment group members have been there since the start of the project and continue to provide their time and energy into the group activities. I would like to thank them all for this continued support. As the Healthy Catchments project is also reaching a critical stage it will be even more important for these people to share their knowledge and encourage other people in their wider communities to attend meetings and have an input into the development of the plan so what is agreed upon takes into account a wide range of concerns and views and the plan is workable with achievable goals to improve water.

Successes

Input and time from landowners in catchment groups, particularly those who hosted and shared information at events.

Excellent facilitators for each catchment group critical to organising events and enabling shared learning and input, and encouraging attendance

Support from business to provide facilitators

Field days combining with industry where possible on topics meeting a need identified by catchment groups

Fact sheets and flyers providing information on catchment activities

Experts from a range of organisations willing to share their knowledge at catchment events

Sector groups combining with farmers in catchment groups to host collaborative events on GMP to reduce duplication and share information

Catchment Groups work best when they are farmer driven and include the wider community.

Farming communities have natural leaders if given time, knowledge and opportunity.

Ongoing Challenges

On-going funding and support for catchment groups is critical

Realistic time allowed to digest plans and information provided to groups so that they can provide constructive feedback

Recognition that farmers and community members are volunteers, giving up their time while running their own businesses.

Catchment groups want to be able to provide an input into plans but need reassurance they will be heard and information taken account of in plan development.

Plans need to include practical and achievable targets

Length of time for 'these beasts' (planning process) to move and make progress, requiring large and long commitment from the community

