



Newsletter March 2014

From the Chair.....

There has been much activity since the last newsletter and the efforts of all the members who have helped over the last few months continues to be critical to our success. The bird count is a great example of where we can connect people to the Lake and provide real information on matters important to decision-making.



The big ticket item for improving the Lake and its environs and tributaries and helping achieve the goals of the Trust is Variation 1 of the Canterbury Land and Water Plan. This complex title basically means the plan for managing things that affect the water flowing into the Lake. This plan will make a significant difference to the way in which people use the land and it will affect all of us living in the catchment indirectly or directly in some way or other. Try to get to a public meeting and make a written (email) submission on it to ECan by 21 March – meeting dates are below. The Trust will be making a submission and your comments to Adrienne would be much appreciated. Our submissions have had an impact on the wider Regional Land & Water Plan of which Variation 1 will be the Selwyn-Waihora Catchment chapter, so it is worth the effort.

The other important item recently has been the consent granted by ECan for the opening of the Lake. WET also made a submission on this and I confess to being disappointed that the Commissioners failed to fully take on board our concerns and even more so that they did not accurately represent our views in their decision report. The concerns we raised included:

- That there is no mechanism for resolving any disagreements between the joint consent holders (Ngāi Tahu and Environment Canterbury);
- That there should be a maximum height at which attempts to open the Lake would commence.

We also suggested that the values of other users (e.g., duck shooters, other recreational users and commercial fishers) could be considered in the decision making process as secondary criteria in addition to the main values set out on the Water Conservation Order (habitat for wildlife, indigenous wetland vegetation and fish; and significance in accordance with tikanga Māori in respect of Ngāi Tahu history, mahinga kai and customary fisheries).

One of our main reasons for wanting a maximum height on the Lake was concern over the effect of higher lake levels on the lake edge habitat and birdlife, and the possibility of increased shoreline erosion leading to increased sediment into the Lake. In all fairness, our suggestion of a maximum height was a belt and braces approach and we are confident that both consent holders will act in a responsible manner and continue to consult with the Parties to the Lake Opening Protocol when making decisions about the opening of the Lake.

I will be overseas on study leave at the University of East Carolina from 12 March to 16 April and leaving the Chair's role in the very capable hands of Ruth Markham-Short.

Take care all
Hamish Rennie, WET Chair

New Video - spread the word!

We have recently completed our second short video, **Planting native plants**, providing advice and encouragement for anyone thinking of undertaking a riparian planting project. This very practical video covers site preparation, planting and installing plant protection, and the maintenance required in the first few years. Thanks to WWF and Environment Canterbury for their help in making this video.



The new video follows on from our video on **Planning for planting**, released last year. This short video covers some of the things to consider before you get started on your planting project. We had assistance from Selwyn District Council and Environment Canterbury for this video along with funding assistance from the Community Environment Fund and the Sustainable Farming Fund.



Both videos can be accessed from our website, along with other resources relating to riparian restoration and drain management.

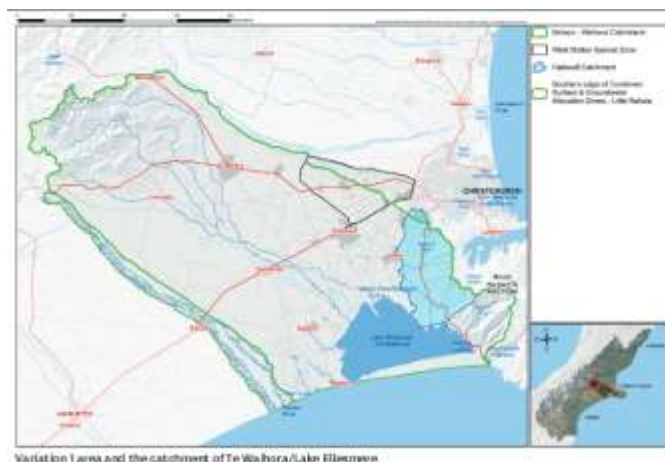
Please pass on the link to the website to anyone who may be interested. Contact us if you would like copies of the videos provided on a CD or USB stick.

Land and Water Regional plan – Variation 1

Variation 1 provides the details of the proposed Selwyn-Waihora sub-chapter of the Land and Water Regional Plan. The rules included in Variation 1 will take precedence over the regional rules. The aim is to improve cultural and environmental outcomes in the catchment while maintaining farm viability and economic growth.

Full details are on the ECan website.

These additional or varied rules are giving effect to the package of actions recommended by the Selwyn-Waihora Zone Committee which, over the past two years, has considered the issues in the catchment through collaboration with Ngāi Tahu, landowners, community members and numerous stakeholders.



The plan was notified on February 22 and submissions close on March 21. Public meetings will be held on Monday March 10, 7pm, Southbridge Rugby Clubrooms; Wednesday March 12, 7pm, Darfield Rugby Clubrooms; and Thursday March 13, 7pm, Lincoln Bowling Clubrooms. Environment Canterbury planners and Zone Committee members will be on hand to explain the rules and answer questions.

Key features of Variation 1 are:

Cultural Landscape/Values Management Area – this designated area is around the lake margin and 20m either side of main tributaries. Consenting of certain activities will have additional requirement to consider impacts on mahinga kai, wahi tapu and wahi taonga. Landowners of properties over 10ha will need to have a Farm Environment Plan in place by 2015.

Nitrogen Limits – for nitrogen loss >15kg N/kg/yr farmers will be required to operate at good management practice N loss rates for their existing land use from 2017 and better than good management practice by 2022. These rates have not yet been determined and will vary with land use, soil type and climate.

Farm Environment Plans (FEPs) – over time FEPs will be required for all farms of 20 hectares or more (10 hectares within the cultural landscape area). Farm Environment Plans cover irrigation efficiency, nutrient use, soil management, wetland and riparian development, biodiversity, collected animal effluent, stock exclusion from waterways, as well as cultural management.

Water allocation, takes and transfers - surface water and groundwater will be managed as one resource across most of the catchment, with revised allocation limits set to sustain improved ecological flows in the Selwyn River/Waikirikiri and springfed streams in all but the very driest of years. A significant reduction in existing allocation will be needed to meet the revised allocation limits and allocations will be reduced by using records of actual use and updating annual volumes as consents are renewed.

Special zones – the West Melton Special Zone will provide restrictions to protect domestic supply, stockwater and community drinking water supplies; in the Halswell River/Huritini Catchment Special Zone resource consent is required for the discharge of stormwater where it has not been authorised by a consented stormwater management plan from 5 December 2013.

WET will be making a submission so comments are welcome and we encourage you make your own submission as well.

2014 Bird survey

On February 22, 2014 – one of the hottest days of the summer – over 40 staff and volunteers from several organisations undertook a count of all the wetland birds present at the Lake. Over 55,000 birds were counted – the full results are on our website and some photos from the day are on our Facebook page.

Thirteen teams each took a section of the lake margin. Each team included experienced OSNZ birders, supported by staff and volunteers from the Department of Conservation, Christchurch City Council, Environment Canterbury, Ngai Tahu, Fish & Game NZ, and Waihora Ellesmere Trust. A small team from Christchurch Rotoract provided support at Springston South Soldiers Memorial Hall, which was our base for the day.

Four teams led by Christchurch City Council Rangers counted the sections of the lake which are located within the city boundary – from the Halswell River towards Kaituna and along Kaitorete Spit. The other nine teams covered the remainder of the lake margin which is in the Selwyn District.

The count is a snapshot of the birds present on a specific day and the results, particularly when compared over a number of years, will provide valuable information for those making management decisions about the lake and lake margin habitats.

The total number of birds recorded is slightly down on last year, with just over 55,000, compared with around 55,700 in 2013. The numbers of waterfowl were down on 2013 – just under 42,000 compared with around



45,000 in 2013. However, the numbers of waders were up with over 7300 recorded, compared with around 6100 in 2013.

Also notable is that 45 species were recorded in 2014 compared with only 39 in 2013. This year's count recorded many more Arctic migratory species, e.g., greenshank and sanderling, that were not seen in 2013.

With the very low lake level, the habitat for birds was of variable quality with some areas of the lake edge too dry. However, the lake edge is extensive and the habitat was very good in places leading to a redistribution of birds around the lake. Overall the bird numbers seem stable.

Little River A&P Show

Congratulations to Matt Searles, winner of the Waihora Ellesmere Trust category in the photo competition at the Little River A&P Show in January with his photo Milky Way over Ellesmere. Trustees Hamish Rennie and Bron Jones attended the show and selected the winning shot.

Hamish particularly liked the sense of wonder evoked by the stars and their reflection, the scale and human connection provided by the lights of distant settlements visible across the lake, the sense of potential activity through the maimai and bike trail, and the connection with land and habitat in the foreground. The technical skill evident involved in taking such a photo was also a factor in the decision.



Riparian Revegetation – part time Agriculture NZ course

Do you know of anyone who might be interested in learning more about riparian restoration and gaining a level 2/3 qualification? Agriculture NZ is looking for more students for a course starting this week. Anyone interested should contact Gerard Karalus, Programme Coordinator, Agriculture New Zealand Ltd, phone 0800 475 455, or check out the website <http://www.pggwrightson.co.nz/Services/RiparianRevegetationPartTime>. The course runs over 9 months so Gerard is keen to hear from you even if you can't start this week.

This course will provide the practical tools and knowledge that can be used to create clean waterways and conserve soil by establishing native plants along stream margins as well as revegetating eroded hillsides. This course is likely to be of interest to farmers and lifestyle block owners, iwi, individuals and groups involved in river restoration, gardening enthusiasts and anyone wanting to gain formal qualifications in Horticulture.



What's coming up?

March 10, 2014, 6pm

WET Trust Meeting, Lincoln Event Centre

March 24, 2014 –

Te Ara Kākāriki Restoration Workshop – hear from a range of experts.

Contact office@kakariki.org.nz for details.

Kind regards,

Adrienne Lomax

General Manager

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