

**20 December 2010**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Withdrawal of Hurunui Water Conservation Order application signals commitment to collaborative approach**

The Minister for the Environment and Environment Canterbury have received letters from the applicants for the Hurunui Water Conservation Order, the New Zealand and North Canterbury Fish and Game Councils and Whitewater NZ, advising the withdrawal of their application.

The applicants said they withdrew the application “so they may instead focus on the collaborative process in respect of the catchment plan for the Hurunui-Waiiau catchments”.

Environment Canterbury Commissioner Peter Skelton welcomed the move and said the applicants’ decision demonstrated a strong commitment to the vision and principles of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy.

“The best outcomes for water management in Canterbury will be achieved by the community working together to achieve the targets agreed to in the water management strategy,” he said.

“Fish and Game and Whitewater NZ are very active participants in the process and the withdrawal of the application signals a real commitment that a collaborative, rather than litigious, approach is a viable way forward.

“This represents a significant development in water management for the region. I hope that it will encourage others to take a similar approach.”

In June this year, the Hurunui-Waiiau zone committee was the first to be set up under the Canterbury Water Management Strategy.

“The very capable committee includes seven community members and four appointees from Ngai Tahu and local government. They have quickly picked up the challenge for the catchment, and are developing a broad water management programme.” A Fish and Game staff member is on that committee.

The aim is to achieve an integrated and forward-looking planning and consenting framework for the Hurunui catchment, while taking into account the views of all stakeholders.

Environment Canterbury will formally advise submitters to the Hurunui Water Conservation Order that it has been withdrawn.

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**For further information contact: Commissioner Peter Skelton, phone 027 636-1728**

## **Background**

The application for a water conservation order on the Hurunui had been made to the Minister for the Environment in 2007. Environment Canterbury was given responsibility to hear the Hurunui Water Conservation Order by the Environment Canterbury (Temporary Commissioners and Improved Water Management) Act. Water conservation orders are usually heard by a special tribunal with appeals heard in the Environment Court.

Water Conservation Orders aim to recognise the outstanding amenity or intrinsic values that water provides, in either a natural or modified state. Orders may be applied over rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, wetlands, or aquifers, and can cover freshwater or geothermal water. If granted by the Minister for the Environment, a Water Conservation Order can restrict or prohibit water 'takes', discharges and other uses of the water.

A moratorium placed on the Hurunui River in August (through to October 2011), and a further moratorium placed on the Wairau River in November, placed a pause on the over-lapping statutory processes underway in the catchment to allow for a much improved outcome allowing for the development and implementation of an effective water management framework for the Hurunui catchment.

It provided a window of opportunity for a collaborative local approach in which provision is made for both the economic development and environmental sustainability of the Hurunui River.

The Hurunui-Waiau zone committee (the first to be set up under the water management strategy) was established in June 2010 and is already developing an implementation plan for the catchment.

The Hurunui River is highly significant to Ngai Tahu and is one of seven major alpine braided rivers in Canterbury. While the farming demands on the Hurunui catchment water resources are high – with around 10,000 hectares of existing irrigation – there are also strong recreational, ecological, fishing, and cultural values for the river.

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