

CWMS and Land and Water Forum Update

Nick Williams*

The anticipation surrounding the selection of the first of the Canterbury water management zonal committees was shared by many in Canterbury as the first phase of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS) was brought on line. At time of print, appointees to the zonal committees of Hurunui-Waiiau and Waimakariri had been picked amidst a cloud of public optimism by the associated mayors and commissioners. Further committees for the remaining eight zones and the regional committee are in various stages of completion.

The zonal committees in partnership with the regional committee will be helping to develop water management implementation programs which address the vision and principles of the CWMS (see Lomax et al. pg 17), or CWMS website (<http://www.canterburywater.org.nz>).

A diversity of interests and experience is desired, the ability of all members involved to work together closely and with other key stakeholders in the community is a high priority. The interviewers assessed each applicant on skills, expertise and experience, as well as their ability to work collaboratively to develop water management solutions that deliver economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes.

This new collaborative approach to water management aims to facilitate an end to what is seen by most as a divisive and highly charged legal environment where decisions are made under the RMA through council hearings and expensive Environment Court appeals.

The Hurunui catchment in particular has been the focus of attention recently surrounding the contest between those who would like to make use of more water for irrigation, and others who would like to protect its natural character and the value of important ecological and recreational services.

There are 4 statutory processes on water management under way in the Hurunui catchment:

- 'Hurunui Water Project' consent applications to take, dam, divert or use water to enable more land to be irrigated.
- The application for a National (Canterbury) Water Conservation Order particularly on the upper reaches of the Hurunui and its tributaries.
- The Proposed Natural Resources Regional Plan (PNRRP)
- Variation 8 to the PNRRP

The July 22nd announcement to impose a moratorium on all water takes from the Hurunui River and its tributaries has been met with support from both sides of the debate. The moratorium will run for 14 months ending in October 2011, with an extension possible if more time is needed. It places a pause on the overlapping statutory processes allowing for the development of an effective water management framework for the catchment (see Rennie on moratoria pg 20).

With breathing space, the Hurunui-Waiiau zonal committee can now begin working towards some form of consensus. The pressure on the Hurunui-Waiiau committee is significant; it will set a precedent for the remaining zone committees as they too strive to develop their own individual water management frameworks.

The Land and Water Forum

A similar collaborative process the [Land and Water Forum](#) (LWF) has been steadily working towards a consensus at the national level since 2008. It has brought together approximately 25 water interest groups nationwide, ranging from environmentalists, primary interest groups, recreational NGOs and iwi. They are working together towards preparing a written report to recommend shared outcomes, goals and long-term strategies for fresh water management in New Zealand. The forum brings traditional opponents around the table and is beginning to break down age-old enmities that have caused successive governments to shy away from fixing the inadequate rules that govern national water allocation.

After being thrown into disarray by the ECan Act earlier this year, there were threats from some corners to walk out on the process. Concern eventually turned to resolve and a continuing effort towards achieving their purpose. The forum is due to report its findings at the end of August. Environment Minister Nick Smith will then be faced with turning the consensus into law while trying not to alienate traditional voters and ensuring he keeps faith with the "collaborative" process.

Essentially what has been initiated for water governance under the CWMS and the LWF is an exercise in human co-operation and a 'meeting in the middle' between individuals and groups who perceive themselves as directly affected by the outcomes of freshwater governance. There will need to be concessions made from both sides of the "develop or protect" divide for anything lasting to come from this process. But the real test will come from the enforcement and enactment of decisions into a statutory mandate (see Lomax et al this issue).

In brief, there is a long road ahead. The two parallel processes, LWF & CWMS, both involve trust and a willingness to break down boundaries to achieve lasting outcomes. A national policy statement on fresh water and environmental standards guided by the soon to be released LWF report would go a long way towards helping guide the CWMS in its implementation. That is if the Minister for the Environment responds expeditiously to the recommendations from the LWF, as opposed to 'sitting' on them for political reasons.

The CWMS may well become a much more important process, providing a model for the management of water not only in Canterbury, but across the nation. A successful outcome from the CWMS, one which garners lasting agreement and one that makes the most of Canterbury's greatest competitive resource advantage would be welcomed. Avoiding the opportunity to make good use of any recommendations from the LWF could place an unnecessary burden on the CWMS to perform, particularly as a non-statutory document arising from messy political process. Failure of these collaborative efforts could be embarrassing for proponents of such approaches.

**Nick is in his 3rd year studying towards a Bachelor of Environmental Management and Planning.*

Canterbury Water Management Zones

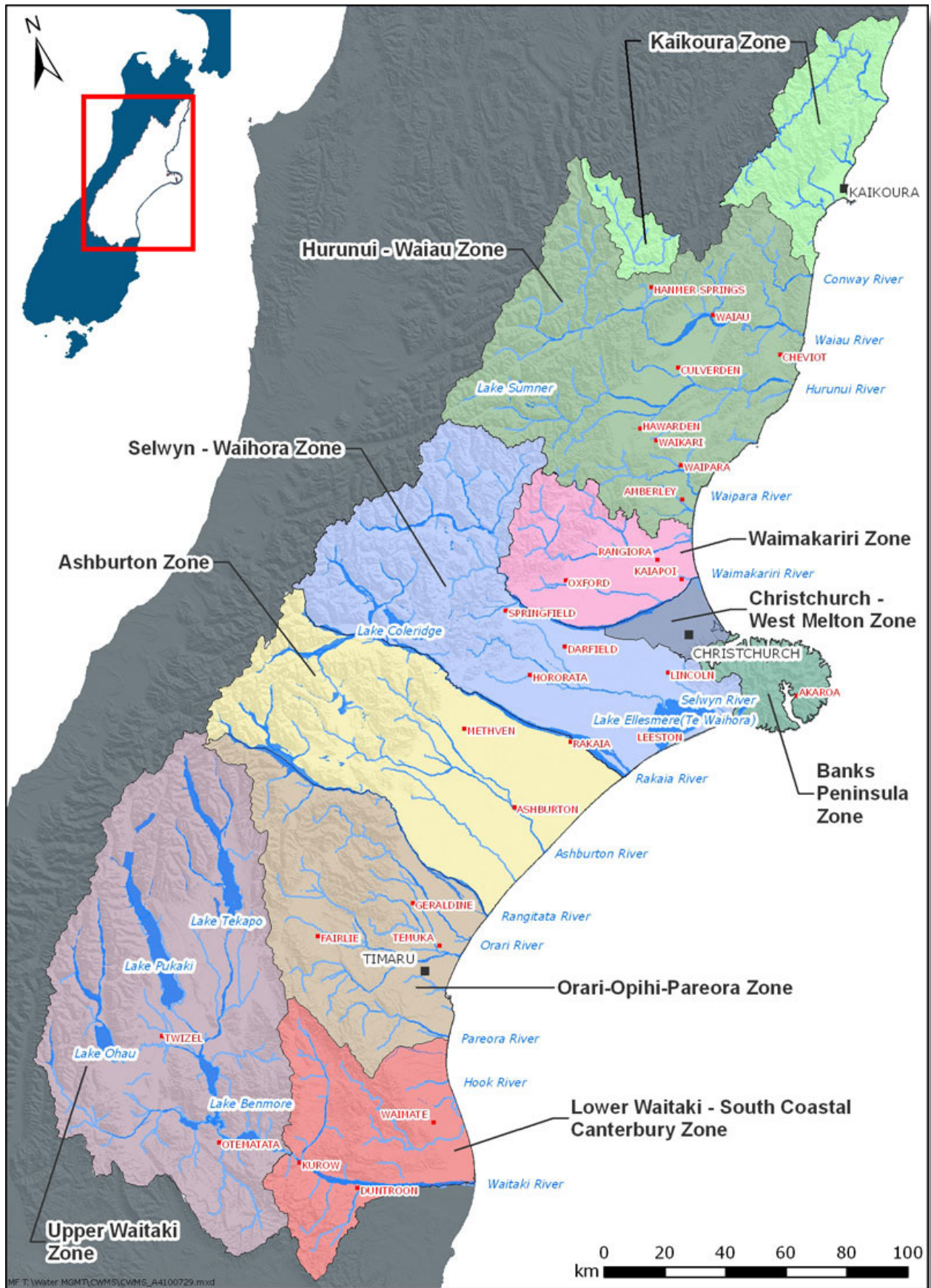


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