



A tangled web: The complex relationships of governance and management in the Te Waihora catchment

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The management of a large catchment involves multiple parties and the degree of integration of that management is always open to debate. Creating a snapshot of those involved and their key relationships can help to build understanding and highlight opportunities for increased collaboration and integration.

Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere, located just south of Christchurch, is New Zealand's fifth largest lake by area and incorporates some of our most important wetland systems. To Ngāi Tahu, as Kaitiaki, Te Waihora represents a major mahinga kai and an important source of mana. To the wider community, both within the lower catchment and further afield, the lake is an area of cultural, natural, historic, recreational and commercial importance. Internationally, Te Waihora is particularly significant for its birdlife abundance and diversity.

Te Waihora is one of New Zealand's most degraded lakes and it is widely acknowledged that the water quality of the lake and its tributaries has declined significantly over recent decades, with increasing loads of nutrients and sediment delivered from extensive agricultural development within the lake's catchment. The catchment drains 276,000 ha and stretches from the foothills of the Southern Alps to the Rakaia River, the Waimakariri River, Banks Peninsula and the plains in between. Much remains to be learned about the hydrology and ecology of this catchment and the lake itself is a highly dynamic environment, with the lake level being managed by periodic mechanical openings to the sea.

Many parties have an interest in the governance and management of the catchment and the lake. In 2013, as part of the preparations for the fourth Living Lake Symposium, the Waihora Ellesmere Trust with help from many others developed a diagrammatic representation of the key relationships within the catchment (see Figure 1).

Around the outside of this diagram are the various agencies, organisations and interest groups who play a role in this catchment. To the left and top left are the statutory agencies, both local and national, and manawhenua. Ngāi Tahu is the iwi and they have established a Management Board made up of representatives of Papatipu *Rūnanga* with an interest in the lake. Along the bottom and to the right are the non-statutory organisations and the main interest groups.

In the centre of the diagram is a range of agreements, plans, protocols and management groups, most of which are specific to Te Waihora. Exceptions include the Canterbury Water Management Strategy which is a regional strategy, with the Selwyn-Waihora Zone Committee charged with implementing the strategy in the Te Waihora catchment. The Quota Management System (QMS) is also included as the commercial fisheries of Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere - tuna/eels, pātiki /flounder and aua /yellow eyed mullet - are managed as part of the national QMS. The lines indicate which organisations have a direct role in each agreement, plan, protocol or group. There are of course many other plans and policies that play an important part in a regional and national context. With the exception of the funding provided by the Ministry for the Environment for the Whakaora Te Waihora Restoration Programme, this diagram does not include funding arrangements. All the parties identified are important but in many cases involvement is ad hoc and related to specific projects rather than ongoing management activities.

As an exercise, the creation of this diagram proved useful. It provided a visual display of the complexities of the relationships and the management challenges and it also highlighted some clear gaps and a lack of connectivity between some areas of the community and those charged with the governance and management of the lake and catchment. For example, at the time of

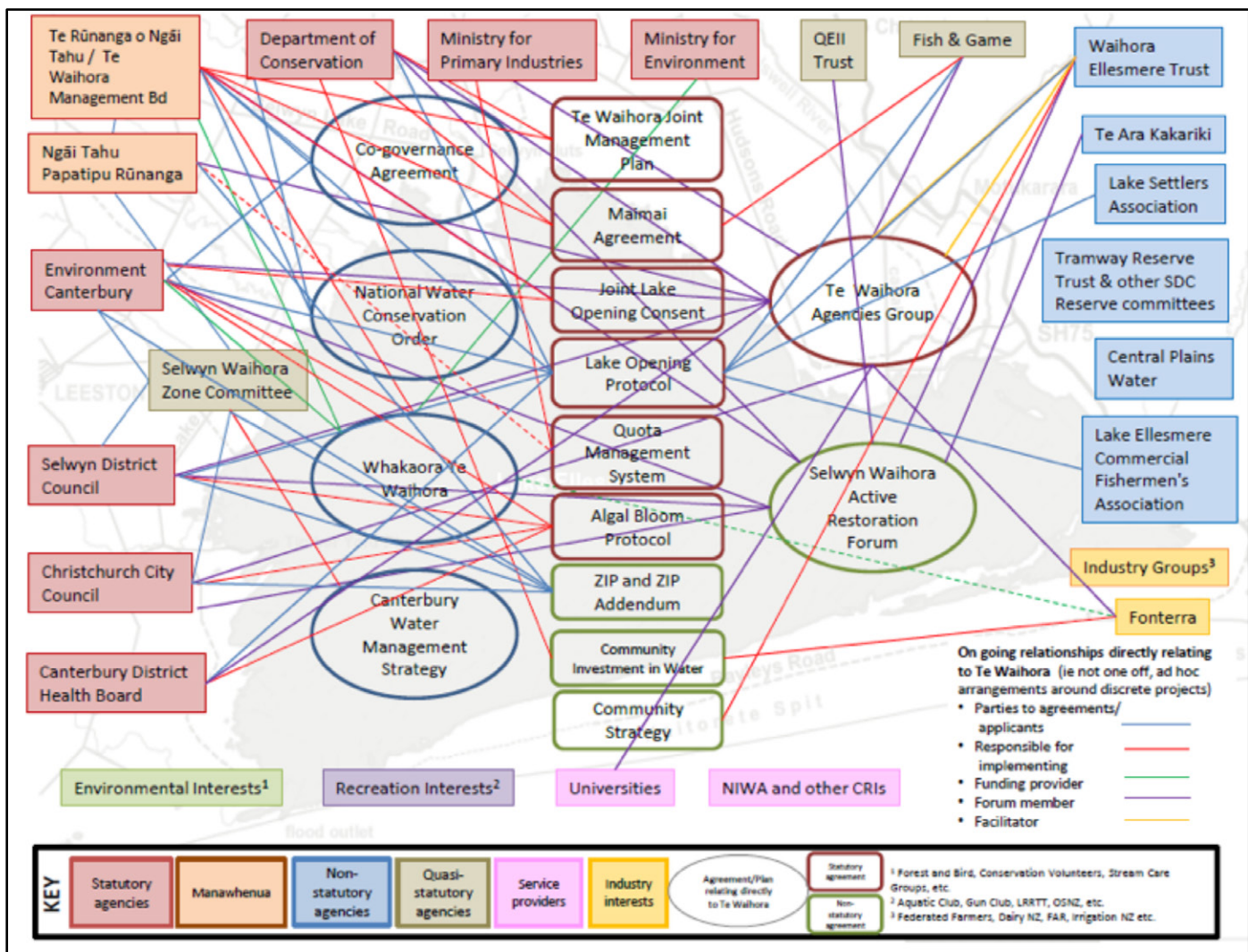


Figure 1. Key relationships in the Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere catchment. Diagram developed by Laurien Heijs, Adrienne Lomax and Hamish Rennie of Waihora Ellesmere Trust, with help from David Perenara-O'Connell, Environment Canterbury. Updated July 2014.

Abbreviations:

- SDC – Selwyn District Council
- ZIP – Zone Implementation Programme
- CRI – Crown Research Institute
- LRRTT – Little River Rail Trail Trust
- OSNZ – Ornithological Society of New Zealand
- FAR – Foundation for Arable Research

A postscript: In this dynamic environment, several significant changes have occurred since the time of writing in late 2014. This includes Selwyn District Council formally becoming a party to the Co-governance agreement, and the disestablishment by Ngāi Tahu of the Te Waihora Management Board.

the 2013 Living Lake Symposium, the local universities were not formally connected to any of the agreements or discussion groups related to the lake, although they worked closely with the statutory agencies and others on a variety of projects. In 2014 the group previously known as the Statutory Agencies Group, which provided an opportunity for those agencies to come together to share information and work together, was renamed Te Waihora Agencies Group and now includes the universities.