

Oreti Catchment Liaison Committee

Co Chairs annual report 21 February 2023

Of late we have seen many examples of the sheer devastation Mother Nature can unleash in our North Island catchment environments. The scenes are hard to believe but the wake up call for us all is how could we rebuild our lives and recover. New ways must be found to stretch our precious ratepayer funds to lessen bureaucratic processes which often lack common sense, and hold back new solutions.

Another year on the Gravel extraction trial at Oporo still has not happened. Frustrations saw Dave and I address the November ES rural services meeting to proactively inform the council of our frustrations. Unfortunately we used the wrong word "Bullying" when highlighting frustrations with Fish and Game. We subsequently apologised by writing to Fish and Game directly and copying all councillors in and again apologising at a Combined Liaison meeting on November 30th. Fish and Game have had no contact with us since but have contacted ES Deputy CE Paul Hulse to make sure we apologise at tomorrow's Rural Services meeting in Invercargill. Dave and I have no problem with that and we consider that issue closed. What we do have an issue with is the way Fish and Game deals with opinions on engineering issues way out of their expertise and without relating it back to Fish and Game implications. We have said we believe a working group on this issue to hear others views is a much better way forward than dealing with staff on a one on one basis. For good leadership should balance everyone's opinion and we all want to understand and hear others opinions first hand. If our trial at Oporo works we will have alleviated a overtopping issue and used a commercial solution to make our ratepayer dollar go further. We can not just put up rates every year.

We thank council for finding a way for the truck crossing sediment trial to proceed to get some actual science to inform the consent without having to get another consent. This must happen very soon so the activity can proceed while the river has low flows rather than be deferred another year. The glacial pace of progress is not acceptable.

The last financial year ended with a June 30th increased credit balance of \$322,812 an increase of \$14,549. We again face a proposed rate increase following last years 6% increase.

During the year Dave and I attended several combined Liaison meetings, and addressed the ES Rural services committee Nov 17th, had a Catchment tour Sept 5th, and a special evening meeting on November 9th.

The evening meeting was called in particular to deal with a proposal to re fence the entire stopbanking system moving all fencing to the toe of the bank on both sides. The cost was at least \$760,000. A good attendance voted the proposal down but wanted an education

campaign highlighting landowner responsibilities. Basically to prevent grazing damage ,and keep noxious weeds and trees off this community asset. We were also concerned that the worst damage has not been dealt to in a timely manner and issues highlighted to the landowners concerned. This highlighted the need for a relocation of ES staff resource?

Not more staff .

It is essential the Catchment division is well resourced so as when our next event happens, under resourcing does not lead to the community suffering and a ES backlash.

The Catchment tour was very informative and highlighted that gravel management is our largest issue .At Mossburn for instance the locals are concerned the river will cut a new channel around the bridge on the north side. There is an opportunity under ES supervision to better maintain our catchment rather than just rock everywhere which we can not afford.

It is essential a Councillor tour is undertaken to add meaning and perspective to the many reports you read.

Lastly Dave and I are pleased with the work financial staff are doing to have a smaller agenda while still large at 22 pages a vast improvement on the 60 of a couple of years ago. We thank the council for the extra actual expenditure columns given to help with clarity while debating the need for a budget increase.

We would like to commend and thank Paul Pollard and Grant Gerrard for the good working relationship we have and passion they have for their jobs. A call from Randle Beal to want to work more proactively with our committee is much appreciated as is the contact we have from Paul Hulse often outside working hours to talk about a particular issue . We really appreciate the good working relationship our committee has with you all. We look forward to working together with ES through the challenges we face for our ratepayers.

David Rose and Dave Marshall