

5. **CENTRAL PLAINS WATER ENHANCEMENT STEERING COMMITTEE: PROGRESS REPORT TO 31 OCTOBER 2000**

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Corporate Plan Output: 9.3.14 Plans and Policy statements—Water Supply	

The purpose of this report is to advise the committee on progress being made by the Joint Steering Committee with feasibility studies and to signal critical decision-making events coming up in December for the two parent councils.

STAGE 1 FEASIBILITY STUDIES

The Steering Committee's technical consultants, URS, are on target to complete their stage I scoping work by 16 November, in time for findings to be pre-circulated and reported to a joint council meeting on 13 December involving the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Christchurch City Council and the Selwyn District Council.

A number of options, typically irrigating approximately 85,000ha of the Central Plains area and all involving storage have been defined and costed and are currently being ranked by the Consultative Working Party. The options involve both the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers and some feature use of Lake Coleridge storage.

For the scoping study stage the task has been to identify schemes that (a) are feasible in an engineering sense, (b) can deliver water to the farm gate at a price the users can afford, and (c) have no fatal flaws. The purpose is to provide sufficient information to the parent councils to allow a decision on whether to proceed to more detailed study on a particular proposal. Only at the end of stage II would an organisation be in a position to secure farmer commitment and proceed to resource consent applications.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

As reported previously, the Steering Committee has appointed a consultation facilitator, Richard Budd and a communications adviser, Rob Smith of PR South to manage the Steering Committee's commitment to seek win/win solutions through extensive consultation, communication and disclosure. Activity has been intense and includes:

- facilitation of a widely representative consultative working party
- area meetings seeking response from likely users
- meetings with particular interest groups
- visits to property owners potentially affected by any of the current options under investigation
- compilation of a database and map of those expressing interest in irrigation
- attendance at committee and subcommittee meetings
- assistance with presentations

REGIONAL ECONOMIC STUDIES

To complement the technical and consultation work the Steering Committee has commissioned a study that will identify the regional benefits resulting from a major water enhancement scheme. This information will be available to assist with the decision-making required at the completion of Stage I in December. It is work that extends beyond the boundaries of the Central Plains area and there is a strong likelihood that assistance with funding the study will be provided by similar groups operating within the Canterbury region.

PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

Steering Committee members have experienced a demanding schedule over the past eight months but their strong interest and wide range of background and expertise has meant that the goals set for stage I studies will be met on time and within budget and with significant support from the affected community. The mix of Councillors (with Councillors O'Rourke and Harrow representing City Council interests), people with strong rural interests and representatives of the business community has worked well, and Doug Marsh's chairmanship has ensured strong forward momentum without missing any important steps.

FUNDING

Stage I

The two councils have allocated \$150,000 each for the initial study and these funds will be fully expended by December 2000 when stage I will be completed and reported. By this date the costs are estimated to be:

	\$
Technical Feasibility Studies	90,000
Regional Economic Study	42,000
Peer Review	10,000
Project Administration/Committee Costs	85,000
Consultation, Communication	88,700
	<u>315,700</u>

It is anticipated that recovery of part costs of the Regional Economic Benefit Study will bring the total expenditure within the \$300,000 budget.

Stage II

If a decision is made to proceed with stage II, which will focus on a particular option and bring that proposal to a level of detail that would allow resource consent application to proceed, the budget requirement will be \$984,000 (which includes a contingency allowance of \$200,000).

In anticipation of stage II proceeding the Steering Committee has been pursuing a number of ways of securing this funding with a view to reducing the amount required from the parent councils. Applications have been made to the Sustainable Farming Fund, Agmardt's Water Studies Grant, The Community Trust and the Industry New Zealand Regional Partnerships Programmes. However it will be some months before the outcome of these applications is known.

STAGE I DECISION MAKING

A process is now in place that will culminate in a presentation by the Steering Committee of the results of stage I studies to a joint meeting involving the Christchurch City Council Strategy and Resources Committee and the Selwyn District Council on 13 December 2000. This meeting will be held at Darfield commencing at 12 noon. The Steering Committee chairman has been asked by the Committee to consult with the Mayor, Selwyn District Council and the Chairperson of the Strategy and Resources Committee about the format and structure of this meeting.

Before that date Councillors will be circulated with a report summarising the stage I findings. This report will be available at the meeting of the Council on 14 December 2000 for information and will be reconsidered in February/March 2001 when the availability of external funding is known.

The Selwyn District Council is also meeting following the briefing to consider its response.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That a special joint meeting of the Selwyn District Council and the Christchurch City Council's Strategy and Resources Committee be held on 13 December 2000 commencing at 12 noon in the Selwyn District Council's offices at Darfield.

Chairman's

- Recommendation:** That the above recommendation be adopted.