

#### 4. CENTRAL PLAINS WATER ENHANCEMENT STEERING COMMITTEE PROGRESS REPORT

<b>Officer responsible</b> Director of Policy	<b>Author</b> Allan Watson, DDI 371 1303
Corporate Plan Output: 9.3.13 Plans and Policy Statements Water Supply	

The purpose of this report is to provide the Council with a three-month progress report on the work of the Central Plains Water Enhancement Steering Committee as required by the Joint Special Committee constitution.

##### **CONCLUSION OF STAGE ONE STUDIES**

The two councils received in December 2000 the final reports of the Stage I studies and agreed to progress to Stage II work which will identify a favoured scheme and take the scheme design to a level of detail that will allow answers to critical questions including:

- What are the social and cultural effects?
- What are the environmental effects and can they be mitigated?
- What will the favoured scheme cost and is this viable?
- Is the scheme consentable?
- What would be an appropriate financial and business structure, etc?

Budget for this stage II work is currently limited, pending the outcome of decisions from funding agencies and as reported to the Council in February 2001, work is being limited to the funds now available. The committee will report to the parent Councils as soon as these decisions are known. In the meantime both councils are being requested to provide contingency funding in their 2001/02 budgets to cover the possibility that the applications are unsuccessful.

##### **POSSIBLE SKILLS AND LABOUR SHORTAGE**

The committee is aware that the employment gains predicted for a scheme of this size will place demands on both the skilled and unskilled labour pool that may not be able to be met and is turning its attention to means of studying this question to see what early actions could be taken.

##### **RANGITATA WATER CONSERVATION ORDER**

The application by the New Zealand Fish and Game Council to have a conservation order placed on the Rangitata River is of significant interest to the Central Plains Water Enhancement Steering Committee and it has decided to lodge a submission favouring the development of a Regional River Plan as a preferable means of ensuring balanced water resource use.

##### **COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION**

The committee has accepted a proposal from Byfield Budd/PR South to continue the communication and consultation process, established last year, through the stage II feasibility study work. A critical element of this work is the ongoing involvement of the widely representative consultative working party.

##### **PROGRAMME FOR 2001**

Assuming the committee is able to fund the full stage II study it intends to complete the work and report back to its parent councils before the end of this year. Providing there is still firm support for progressing beyond this, the next stage will be resource consent applications, a process that will inevitably involve considerable expense and time. When considering the findings of stage II feasibility work the two councils will also need to decide on the governance structure that should take the project through the consent process and into design and construction phase.

##### **“OUR WATER IN THE BALANCE”: COORDINATION WITH REGIONAL COUNCIL STUDIES**

The committee is aware that an irrigation scheme across the Central Plains could have a beneficial influence on the groundwater system that supplies the city's water and spring-fed streams and rivers. Currently the proposed scheme area does not cover the West Melton–Christchurch re-charge area but the committee has asked its consultants to include in its brief consideration of this opportunity and to consult with ECan on coordinating study -to avoid duplication.

## **SYNERGIES WITH IRRIGATION STUDIES SOUTH OF THE RAKAIA**

The committee has worked hard to maintain positive contact with the Ashburton Community Water Trust and in February requested a report on ways to ensure that there is no duplication of investigative effort and that its own feasibility study costs are minimised by making use of the common areas of study.

## **MARKETING OF PRODUCT**

Outputs from irrigated land will require to be market-driven and the Committee is having discussions with Lincoln University and the University of Canterbury to determine their interest and ability to assist with market research.

### **Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** That the information be received.