

# CENTRAL OTAGO ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIETY INC.

PO Box 10  
Omakau 9377  
Tel: 03 447 3744 e-mail: exemplar@scorch.co.nz

## Oral Submission re Proposed Plan Change 5A (Lindis: Integrated Water Management)

Submitted by: DG Shattky on behalf of the Central Otago Environmental Society

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### Submission

#### Background

COES considers that the proposed integrated water management plan for the Lindis River reflects a widely held public understanding that rivers and streams are a vital resource maintaining healthy communities and a healthy economy – in this context, ‘health’ being shorthand for good condition. However the reality is that we humans have dramatically changed our rivers by degrading their condition and thereby putting the health and well-being of our communities at risk.

The Resource Management Act (RMA) reflects the interdependence of our society and our environment by requiring that we not only provide for the well-being, health and safety of communities but that we also safe-guard the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems. With regard to restoring and managing the health of the Lindis River, this obligation requires that the matter of a minimum summer flow be resolved quickly.

#### Establishing a Minimum Summer Flow

The Tarras farming community has, for many years, enjoyed a permissive water take regime; today it is very evident that regime is no longer sustainable as intensified land use has increased the consumption of irrigation water to a point during dry periods when demand exceeds that which the river can supply and still remain in a good condition. Despite this evidence, some farmer/irrigator interests oppose the ORC’s proposal to establish a minimum summer flow of 750 l/s flow (40% of MALF) arguing that the resulting restrictions during extended dry periods will render their current operations unsustainable and reduce farm incomes, to the detriment of the Tarras community’s well-being.

Conversely, COES considers that the ORC’s proposed minimum flow (750 l/s) is less than meaningful and that even 1000 l/s is far from ideal, reflecting an unnecessary concession to present land use practice. While acknowledging the possibility of adverse economic impacts resulting from an increased minimum summer flow, COES considers that failure to restore the Lindis R. to a healthy condition will eventually result in the degradation of the river to a point where it can no longer sustain its own environment, let alone support those economic activities presently reliant upon its continued good health.

Consequently, COES advocates a whole-of-stream restoration by way of establishing a minimum flow of 1500 l/s (80% of MALF) thereby encouraging land use change and the implementation of more sustainable farming practices. These changes will, in turn, provide for the enduring well-being of the Tarras community.

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