

Transition from Mining Privileges to RMA Consents

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Introduction

Otago Fish and Game Council - established under the Conservation Act 1987

Public Entity reports to Parliament and Minister of Conservation

Statutory function:

to protect, maintain, and enhance sports fish and game bird populations, their habitats (rivers, lakes and wetlands), in the interests of anglers and hunters

Local Body Structure – regionally elected council

Interest in Freshwater Management

Trout and salmon (almost) exclusively wild and self sustaining by natural spawning and rearing

Rely on healthy freshwater ecosystems to meet their needs through different stages in their life cycles

Healthy productive rivers allow sustainable recreational harvest

Therefore habitat protection/enhancement is top priority

Hills Creek



Lower Lindis River



Mining Privileges

Historic allocation of water through mining privileges had no consideration of :

- the environment or environmental bottom lines,
- the finite nature of the water resource

Over-allocation of water has a major influence on the extent, quality, resilience and productivity of freshwater ecosystems.

Deeply involved in RMA consent applications and minimum flow plan changes .

Trout fishery values in smaller catchments

Common trout spawning and rearing areas – natural hatcheries

Service adult habitat areas downstream

Need to consider:

- fish passage and barriers
- summer low flows
- meaningful connection
- habitat availability
- food production
- cumulative effect downstream
- adult trout habitat and angling values (National Angling Survey)



Quartz Creek, Wanaka



Information problems in smaller catchments

Limited or lack of information on hydrology (MALFs)

Complex hydrological interactions with takes, returns, and groundwater

Aquatic habitats in mining privilege catchments already impacted – site inspection not a good guide to values

Short record of water use (quantity taken, irrigated area etc)

Cardrona River



Lindis River

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Scale of the Transition Exercise

400 + deemed permits in Otago expire on 1 October 2021

Law change was intended to restore flows and values

Many sites heavily impacted and values degraded

'Paper Water' is a problem

Naturalised MALF is the benchmark

Myths and misconceptions

'small rivers and streams go dry naturally'

'less water is good for native fish'

'irrigators can expect to retain what they presently use'

'public interests should be happy with any improvement in flows'

'if there are no in-stream values present at the take point there is no need to consider restoring flow'

How Otago Fish and Game can contribute

Fish and Game supportive of catchment group approach

Can help deemed permit holders with advice on values

Need information to make decisions on flow requirements

May carry out field inspection – joint inspections best

Some catchments (e.g. Sowburn) and individual deemed permits have already successfully transitioned