

Lindis Minimum Flow Community Workshop #5

Tarras Community Hall – 1 April 2014

Workshop objective

to present to the local and wider community a recommended regime for managing the surface water and groundwater resources of the Lindis catchment and Bendigo-Tarras Basin

Attendees

Approximately 50 community members (including local irrigators, representatives of Otago Fish Game Council and KTKO)

ORC Councillors: Stephen Woodhead (Chairman) , **Graeme Bell, Gary Kelliher, Gerry Eckhoff**

ORC staff: Peter Bodeker (ORC hief Executive), **Matt Hickey** (Manager Resource Science Unit), **Matt Dale** (Water Resource Scientist), **Marian Weaver** (Resource Management Procedural Specialist), **Tom De Pelsemaeker** (Policy Analyst)

Overview Key themes

Irrigation input into groundwater resources

Comment: Participants raised the issue that current irrigation practices provide for the recharge of groundwater resources. At present, border dyke and flood irrigation is widespread. If irrigators change to spray the groundwater resources will loose their recharge from irrigation.

Concerns were raised that changing irrigation practices will result in a drop in groundwater levels and consequently will reduce the flows in the lower Lindis River. This could have an adverse impact on irrigators by increasing the number of rationing days when flows reach or approach the minimum flow.

Greater clarity around values assessment method and analysis method

Comment: Certain participants asked for greater clarity regarding the methods used for identifying and analysing values and their relative importance. Some argued that economic values have been given greater weight under the recent RMA reforms.

Accuracy of flow data and reliability of flow monitoring data

Comment: Concerns were raised about the accuracy of monitoring sites and the use of modelling as a scientifically valid research method.

Answer: Information is available for scrutiny. However, scientific evidence is needed to refute it .

Managing water takes at low flow conditions

Comment: Concerns were raised about the how irrigators were expected to manage water taking during (prolonged) periods of low flows. Some irrigators pointed out that aren't many opportunities for storage in the Lindis. Not many places where dams can be built.

Answer: Rationing would be the best approach.

Impacts of 450 l/s minimum flow on irrigators

Comment: Participants stated that the report "Lindis Irrigation Company Limited: Economic Business Case" states that the average number of days per year that irrigators could not take water in 2007 is 76.

Answer: The report focuses at flows measured at Ardgour Road monitoring site. There are two flow sites on the Lindis River; Lindis Peak which is above the majority of abstraction and Ardgour flow site (the proposed minimum flow site) which is located below all takes. Lindis Peak flow site gives a better representation of the water that is actually in the catchment than Ardgour. Also, the "76 days" period referred to in the report includes rationing days and not just cut-off days.

Maintaining values vs. enhancing values

Comment: Some participants stated that aquatic ecosystems should remain as they are now. Hundred years of irrigation in the Lindis catchment has created own ecosystem. The minimum flow should maintain existing values, not enhance them.

Reasons for not supporting TWL

Comment: Why did ORC decide not to support Tarras Water Limited?

Answer: There are a variety of reasons why ORC decided not to support TWL:

- 1. A number of conditions had to be met and disagreement had arisen regarding the conditions that were met/not met.*
- 2. Engineering report*
- 3. Financial risk*
- 4. Political considerations*

Mitigating measures

Comment: Participants asked whether proponents of a high minimum flow/flow continuity in the Lindis River would accept the pumping up groundwater to augment the flows in the Lindis.

Answer: This discussion needs to be held. However, Kai Tahu indicate that this is a complex issue and that the mixing of water is not desirable.

When will the minimum flow apply

Comment: Participants asked when the minimum flow requirement will come into effect.

Answer: The minimum flow will not apply until all mining privileges are gone.

Providing for cultural, recreational, ecosystem and natural character values

Comment: Proponents for higher flows in the river stated that:

- They want higher flows in the river than those that are recorded now;
- More water should be left in the river instead of increasing the area being irrigated;
- The recommended minimum flow of 450 l/s is insufficient to provide for aquatic ecosystems (native and exotic fish), other wildlife and natural character;
- Less and less campers are camping along the river because of the dry river bed.
- This is the 3rd or 4th meeting where those present are predominantly hearing about irrigation interests. Very little input is provided by others in the community. Component of interests is not here today (e.g. campers on the Lindis);
- Having the river flow under the SH8 bridge is not enough. The river should connect with the Clutha. Irrigators must look for alternatives; and
- Values other than recreational values are considered important for Ngai Tahu, which considers 450 l/s barely acceptable.

Other participants questioned:

- the relevance of the recreational or aesthetic values; and
- the value that a minimum flow would offer for the local community (e.g. Manuherikia has algae blooms).

These participants considered that:

- people are still camping along the dry river bed; and
- people wanting to engage in recreational activities have alternatives elsewhere.

Funding and support

Comment: Private irrigation schemes are currently being considered. The following issues/questions were raised by participants:

- Irrigators would like to switch to alternative sources but it is too expensive.
- Why not using carrots, instead of sticks?
- Would ORC consider buying water rights in order to get more water flowing through the river?
- Would ORC consider supporting private schemes?

Answer: ORC has a number of tools to support the local community:

- *Environmental grant – provides for opportunity to fund irrigation schemes where there is an environmental benefit. However, the Local Government Act has been changed, and this has limited the policy.*

- *Science studies*
- *Assist with formation of water management groups*
- *\$200.000/year fund for early investigations.*

There are conditions in the funding policy and the LGA requirements need to be met.

ORC would consider supporting a community-based approach. But currently ORC doesn't know whether there is sufficient support within the local community for a community wide approach.

Economic impacts of reduced access to water

Comment: Loss of access to water erodes the capital value of property.

Request to delay the minimum flow process

Comment: Irrigators requested more time and want to work with ORC to determine an appropriate allocation limit and minimum flow. They don't want to be forced into efficient irrigation if they still have to turn off their irrigators.

Some participants stated that the community is regrouping/trying different things. They don't know who will be left in the Lindis in 3-4 years time.

Answer: The minim flow process has been coming since 1991. But ORC has held off this process until now. Waiting any longer is not desirable as ORC wants to prepare the community for 2021.

ORC will only delay the process if there is evidence that the community is making progress.

ORC is now consulting under Clause 3, Schedule 1 of the RMA (Consultation Draft). The proposal is not set in stone yet. The Plan Change won't be notified until this winter.