



A joined-up approach to catchment groups in Otago

Catchment groups new and old will soon have more organisational and administrative support, which means more time for their members to do great things for Otago waterways.

Catchment group leaders in Otago are establishing an umbrella organisation to support existing catchment groups and help new ones get off the ground.

The initiative will provide organisational support for catchment groups and volunteers, help groups secure funding, provide administration and communication support, and facilitate access to experts, information and technology.

Over time, it will also look to establish long-term funding pipelines to support changing needs, and act as a conduit between government, regional authorities, and local stakeholders.

The Otago Regional Council (ORC) put \$200,000 aside in this year's budget to support catchment groups, and convened a Catchment Support Advisory

Group made up of staff and councillors, catchment group representatives and a regional coordinator from NZ Landcare Trust.

The Advisory Group's goal is to create and support an Otago-wide network of catchment groups that are addressing water quality and waterway health, now and for generations to come.

Using the money, ORC is helping the catchment groups to establish an incorporated society. The incorporated society will employ a fulltime regional coordinator and contract more localised coordinators as required to support catchment groups across Otago.

Pomahaka farmer Lloyd McCall, a long-standing member of the Pomahaka Water Care Group and one of the main organisers behind the collaboration, said that it was on a really exciting trajectory.

"This initiative will support engaged landowners to achieve environmental outcomes specific to their area.

"Providing coordination and administrative support, along with information sharing and connecting with all stakeholders, will allow landowners to concentrate on achieving on-the-ground outcomes.

"Lyndon Strang from North Otago Sustainable Land Management (NOSLAM) is the establishment chairperson and there is representation across all of Otago. It's exciting to see the development of a working relationship between landowners and the ORC in recent years culminating in this support of a catchment group network," Mr McCall said.



Welcome to the spring edition of the Otago Regional Council's rural magazine, *Waterlines*.

It's fair to say 2020 has been an interesting sort of year so far for the ORC. Like the rest of New Zealand, we've faced a bit of disruption from Covid-19, which has impacted how we consult with the community, changed the way many of our staff work and caused us to re-evaluate our funding to avoid a general rates increase for Otago.

Besides the pandemic and lockdown, we've also been busy with urgent work in the water policy area, getting our heads around the new requirements of national water regulations and planning for the next ten years through our Long-term Plan.

In July, Councillors voted for change around the governance table, and I took up the role as Chair. I'm keen to get the Council working constructively on the same page, and to take full advantage of

the knowledge and skills we have across staff and governance.

The big news of the moment is the new set of regulations from the government, collectively known as the Essential Freshwater package, which have been in force since 3 September. Included in the regulations are new National Environmental Standards for Freshwater, which are basically rules that apply right across the country, regardless of regional plans. Some of these take immediate effect, and others have a bit of lead-in time for people to comply.

There's a lot to unpack and implement in these regulations—both for you in the community, and for ORC. We know how important it is that people are aware of and understand the rules, and we're taking an education-first approach to implementation. Head over to our website for information about what the new rules might mean for you.

We recently signed off on sixteen new staff in our Consents team to manage the requirements of the new rules. These new team members will be recruited over the coming months and distributed around the region, including in North and South Otago.

Staff have been hard at work on our new Regional Policy Statement. This was on track for notification this year, but due to an additional requirement introduced by the new Essential Freshwater

policies, the deadline has moved to next year and we're having additional conversations with communities about their freshwater visions right now (see page 11 for details).

Long-term planning is an opportunity to take stock of where we're at, and where we want ORC to be headed. A Long-term Plan is a ten-year plan that we redo every three years. That might sound odd, but it means we are always keeping an eye on the future, making sure that our priorities and values for the region align with our work programmes and spending, and having regular conversations with Otago communities to make sure we're on-track with their expectations. Look out for your opportunity next year to place feedback on the Long-term Plan for 2021-31.

In the meantime, we'll keep doing our best to roll with the Covid punches, to keep you informed and up to date about changes affecting you, and to work collaboratively on implementing new rules for the good of our environment.

*He waka eke noa –
We're all in this together.*

Andrew Noone
Chair, Otago Regional Council

Catchment group support

Otago Regional Councillor Bryan Scott said that catchment groups come in many shapes and sizes and already do a lot of great work on the ground.

“Ideally, this strategic support will assist them on their respective journeys, particularly those that are evolving or endeavouring to get to the next level.

“One of the many great things about catchment groups is that regardless of current politics or policies, people of all backgrounds can simply roll up their sleeves and work together to achieve positive things for their waterways and environment.

“The Otago Regional Council is absolutely thrilled to support this initiative,” Cr Scott said.

The umbrella organisation will now work to establish itself as a legal entity and recruit for roles to support catchment groups to improve water quality throughout Otago.



The Waitahuna/Tuapeka Catchment Group during a stream health monitoring session with NZ Landcare Trust.

What are catchments and catchment groups?

A **catchment** is a bounded area of land where surface and sub-surface water flows into streams, rivers and wetlands. Land use practices across a catchment—good and bad—can impact the quality of freshwater in those waterways.

Catchment groups are local communities of people working together to understand and improve water quality within a catchment. Catchment groups pursue opportunities to enhance water quality and resolve water quality issues, and they involve diverse membership from the people living in a catchment area.

Catchment groups undertake a range of activities to improve the natural environment, such as monitoring water quality, fencing waterways, riparian planting, protecting native plants, managing pests, and more.

Crucially, catchment groups share knowledge and develop integrated plans for collaborative approaches to good environmental practice.



Catchment group coverage in Otago. Map drawn from information provided by NZ Landcare Trust.



Implementing Essential Freshwater

New rules to protect and enhance New Zealand’s waterways are now in place—and they may affect you. On 5 August, the government gazetted new national direction on freshwater management, signing a suite of regulations into law.

The package includes a new National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management, new National Environmental Standards for Freshwater, new stock exclusion regulations under section 360 of the Resource Management Act, and an amendment to the Resource Management (Measurement and Reporting of Water Takes) Regulations 2010.

ORC has to give effect to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management through our regional plans and our Regional Policy Statement. The National Environmental Standards are effectively nationwide rules, which apply across the country regardless of regional plans.

The new regulations have had effect since 3 September, however, while some parts need to be addressed immediately, others have a period of time built in for people to comply.

ORC Chair Andrew Noone said the council welcomed the Essential Freshwater regulatory reform package.

“This package from the government has been a long time in the works, and there is a lot of great intent around restoring and protecting the health of New Zealand waterways.

“The challenge for ORC and the community now will be in how we implement the new requirements to ensure they have the desired environmental benefits. We’re looking closely at what’s required of us and our

region’s farmers, and prioritising the most urgent work,” Cr Noone said.

Education First

Regulatory General Manager Richard Saunders said that compliance with previous rules in Otago was good, but work was required to get up to speed with the new regulations.

“We saw good results from our annual winter compliance flights in July, with a lot of positive changes clearly visible from the air in how farmers were managing winter grazing and other land use practices. Out of the hundreds of properties we flew over, there were nine that needed following up on the ground.

“But the new National Environmental Standards will tighten the restrictions, especially around winter grazing, in future.”

Richard said ORC was taking an “education-first” approach to helping people implement the changes.

“These rules will impact a lot of Otago farmers, and they impact ORC as the consenting authority. We’re keen to work alongside farmers, organisations and catchment groups to help interpret and understand the rules, and to give practical advice for complying with them.

“A lot of people are already on a good trajectory with improving their environmental practices, and we want to make sure that’s able to continue under the new rules,” Richard said.

Rules for Intensive Winter Grazing

Under the new rules, farmers will require a consent for intensive winter grazing activities where the activity does not comply with the permitted activity criteria.

However, if you carried out winter grazing this year, and you’re not planning any changes to the scale, scope or intensity of your wintering, then you may have “existing use rights” and not require consent for winter 2021.

Even if you have existing use rights, you may need to apply for a consent under the new rules by 31 October 2021 for the 2022 season. We encourage farmers to engage with ORC early to discuss their individual requirements.

Our advice for farmers is to follow good management practices in the planning and delivery of your 2021 winter grazing. If you are proposing to graze a greater area than in 2020, then you should contact Council to discuss whether a resource consent will be required.

More information about the new rules is available online at www.orc.govt.nz/newwaterrules, or you can call 0800 474 082 or email customerservices@orc.govt.nz.

Update on EPA-notified plans

As well as the changes being introduced at a national level, ORC is making some plan changes of our own to protect and restore freshwater in urban and rural environments.

The Environmental Authority (EPA) notified the Water Permits and Water Quality Plan Changes on 6 July, after they were “called in” by the Minister for the Environment.

The “Water Permits Plan Change” is Plan Change 7 to the Water Plan, which provides a planning framework to replace expiring deemed permits and resource consents.

The “Water Quality Plan Changes”, or “Omnibus”, are Plan Change 8 to the

Water Plan and Plan Change 1 to the Waste Plan, which strengthen water quality provisions.

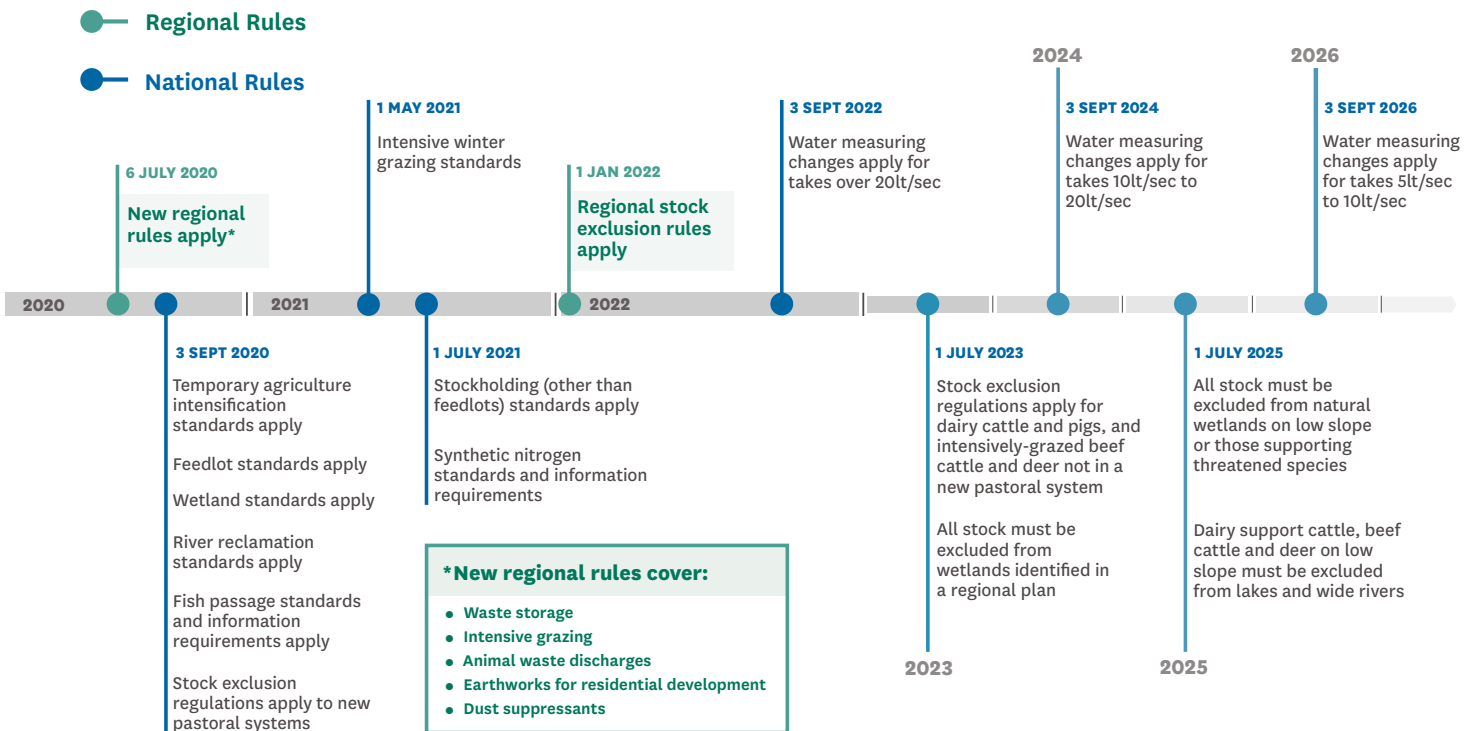
In September, the EPA published a Summary of Submissions and called for further submissions, which is a process where anyone can lodge a further submission, either supporting or opposing someone else’s submission, provided they have a genuine interest.

With further submissions now closed, the plan changes will be referred to the Environment Court in the coming months. Anyone who indicated they wish to attend the Environment Court hearings for any of the plan changes will be contacted about the next steps.

Among the submitters on Plan Change 8 was ORC itself. We submitted on the plan changes to request the removal of

intensive grazing and stock exclusion sections, because our rules largely align with the requirements of the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater. Rather than duplicating the national rules, with slightly different regional complexities, we have asked the Environment Court to consider removing them from our plan change to make things clearer.

Our submission also suggested that the Water Plan includes an advice note directing people to the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater and national regulations for rules related to intensive grazing and stock exclusion.



“Soil Your Undies” and other ways to get your hands dirty

This creatively named project is all about measuring the health of Otago soils.



Clockwise from top: Fresh undies made by Macraes Moonlight School students, ready to be buried; Students at Five Forks School prepare to bury their undies; Teachers learning about soil health during a professional development day.

School students participating in the Soil Your Undies citizen science project are learning all about soil, like how it's formed and how to assess the different components of soil. Old undies are one of the tools they are using to measure soil health—perhaps not one of the scientific methods you remember learning about at school.

The project is a collaboration between NOSLaM (North Otago Sustainable Land Management), Enviroschools, Beef and Lamb, AgResearch, the University of Otago and six schools in the North Otago area, with support from the East Otago Catchment Group, Fonterra Farm Source and the Foundation of Arable Resource.

The role of the undies is simple: students buried the (clean) undies in their school grounds and at home over a few weeks in September; when they're dug up, they'll be able to tell us a bit about the soil.

The undies will be uncovered in early November, and by measuring how much they've degraded, students will be able to tell how healthy the soil is: the worse the state of the undies, the healthier the soil.

NOSLaM Engagement Officer Bridget McNally said it was great to get students interested in soil health from a young age.

“Soil Your Undies is a fun, engaging and hands-on way for students, teachers and the community to learn about the importance of healthy soils. We're here to spread knowledge of good land management practices—and those seeds need to be planted at a young age.”

Creepy crawlies

Earthworms are another soil health indicator for the students to examine.

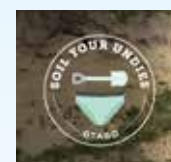
The teachers involved in the project recently had a full day of professional development on soil health, which involved getting their hands into the soil and trying out the activities they can do with students to get them excited about soil.

They discovered that identifying worms was a tricky task—even with help from the experts on hand.

The students are also getting first-hand experience working with dung beetles through this project. Dung beetles are described as “Eco-system engineers”, as they deal with dung, improving soil health and water quality in the process.

The aim of the project is to get people excited about soil, map local soil health and explore strategies for improving soil health. A community event is being planned for November, where the students will be able to share the findings of their research with the wider community.

Learn more about dung beetles online: dungbeetles.co.nz



Soil Your Undies Otago is funded by the Participatory Science Platform and ORC's ECO Fund.

www.curiousminds.nz/funding/participatory-science-platform/

www.orc.govt.nz/ecofund



ECO Fund Profile: Waste Free Wanda

Singing, dancing, acting, TikToks... Waste Free Wanda does it all, while working for a waste free world. ORC have had the pleasure of supporting Plastic Free Wanaka to bring the Waste Free Wanda show to schools around Otago this year through our ECO Fund.

This one-woman musical is written and performed by award-winning singer/songwriter Anna van Riel, who aims to empower children to work towards a waste-free world with her 80s-inspired character, Wanda.

With a huge focus on reducing and reusing, instead of counting on just recycling, Wanda's songs tackle issues like single-use plastics, and provide kids with the knowledge and strategies to reduce waste and protect our environment.

"The show has proven to be really effective with tamariki, due to having catchy pop tunes that serve as learning resources. It's a really different and empowering approach to educating," Anna said.

"It shows kids what we can do and how they can be superheroes in their own back yard—because it's really easy to get overwhelmed by the current state

of the planet, and right now we need to figure out what we can do."

Anna has recently completed the Central Otago leg of her tour, inspiring hundreds of kids to take action and leaving them with important messages in the form of catchy earworms.

With the Central Otago and Waitaki legs now under her belt, Anna aims to complete the Clutha leg in Term 1 2021, rounding off a full Otago regional tour.

The Waste Free Wanda show is special because it emphasises getting as many schools on board as possible, no matter where or how big they are.

"I love touring through the small schools. So often our wee schools miss out; I think it's really important to reach them too," Anna said.

If you want to see Waste Free Wanda in action, you can check out her Facebook

page and YouTube channel by searching "Waste Free Wanda", or dance along with her on TikTok [@Wastefreewanda](#). You can also find her music on Spotify for the kids to jam along at home.

About the ECO Fund

To find out more about the projects we've supported through the ECO Fund, or how you can apply, visit our website at www.orc.govt.nz/ecofund.

Our October round has just closed, so applications will be open again from 1-20 March 2021. Get in touch with our team before making an application by emailing ecofund@orc.govt.nz or calling 0800 474 082.

Lake Dunstan - there's a new Harbourmaster in town



The Harbourmaster's vessel, Kaitiaki, on the water at Lake Dunstan.



This summer, ORC's Harbourmaster team will be on the water at Lake Dunstan to keep an eye on recreational boating, after the maritime safety delegation was transferred back to ORC from the Central Otago District Council (CODC).

ORC was responsible for safety on the lake until 2006, when it was delegated to CODC. Last year, the process began to reverse the delegation, and as of 1 September, it sits with ORC once again.

ORC Harbourmaster Steve Rushbrook is looking forward to spending more time in Central this summer.

"We'll be getting out on the lake to patrol, talk to boaties and other people enjoying the lake, and make sure everyone's got a good understanding of the rules and they're enjoying themselves safely."

As part of the transfer of delegation, ORC's navigational safety bylaw has been updated and merged with the former CODC navigational bylaw to cover Lake Dunstan. That means some changes to the rules, but Steve said there would be no surprises for Lake Dunstan's regular water users.

"This will give more consistency across our region and with our neighbouring regional councils.

"Another benefit of the transfer will be a greater level of service for Lake Dunstan water users, as the ORC Harbourmasters will provide year-round harbourmaster expertise for the lake, and be available on-call 24/7."

Safer boating this summer

Steve and his deputy, Pete Dryden, have been putting an implementation plan into action ahead of the upcoming summer recreation season.

"We've spent a fair bit of time on the lake, getting familiar with the area and the locals. We've got an implementation plan that includes changes to signage, upgrading navigation safety buoys and marks, building awareness in the community of the rules, and kicking off monitoring and enforcement activities on the water," Steve said.

Steve and Pete will be participating in Maritime New Zealand's "No Excuses" campaign over the summer, to check that boaties are following life jacket rules and the safer boating code.

"The key messages of the safer boating code are to wear your lifejacket, take two waterproof ways to call for help, check the marine weather forecast, avoid alcohol and be a responsible skipper. We'll be getting out on random days during summer to monitor compliance with the rules, and to generally educate boaties about the safer boating code," Steve said.

The updated Otago Navigational Safety Bylaw can be viewed on our website, at www.orc.govt.nz/NavBylaws



Deputy Harbourmaster Pete Dryden putting new signage in place.



Pest of the Month: Rooks

Every spring, ORC's biosecurity team undertakes inspections to make sure there are no established rook populations in Otago.

Large "parliaments" (the name for a flock of rooks) can inflict thousands of dollars' worth of damage to Otago's grain and new grass crops. Rooks love to eat fields of cereals at all stages of growth, as well as other seeds that have recently been sown.

Thankfully, Otago hasn't seen evidence of an established rook population for quite some time. But they're a highly mobile pest, and we can't count our eggs just yet!

That's why our best asset to ensure rooks don't establish themselves in Otago is the thousands of eyes and ears already on the ground in the community.

Here are a few tips on how to spot rooks, and what to do if you do spot them:

- Rooks are easiest to identify around winter and spring, because they're all together in rookeries for springtime breeding or communal winter roosts.
- Rooks are a part of the corvid family, which includes crows. We don't have crows in New Zealand though, so if you see something that looks like a crow, it's probably a rook.
- Rooks are very social, so you can often hear their distinctive "caw" when they're flying.

If you think you have rooks on your property, DO NOT try to control them yourself—it's against the rules in our pest plan, unless you have been instructed by our biosecurity team.

Instead, give ORC a call on **0800 474 082** or email pests@orc.govt.nz

Pest Hub

Each month, we highlight a timely "Pest of the Month". To kick off spring we took a look at rooks, and now we're highlighting nodding thistle. If you're interested in finding out more about rooks, nodding thistle, or any other pests in Otago, check out our Pest Hub at www.orc.govt.nz/pesthub

Everyday water heroes – Sam and Liz Barton



Sam and Liz Barton won the Otago Regional Council Quality Water Management Award at the 2020 Ballance Farm Environment Awards. We interviewed them to find out their winning formula.

Sam and Liz Barton farm at Moa Flat in West Otago. The farm, Montana Pastoral Ltd, is made up of 4,800 sheep and beef stock units. Montana’s on-farm objective is to “consistently maximise profit by sustainably producing to a very high standard, while minimising any negative impact on the stock, staff and the environment.”

Sam and Liz want to be high performing, but also to preserve what they have, and enhance it where they can.

“We believe that by preserving natural resources we will also increase our capital as demand for farms that have incorporated modern farming systems and infrastructure increase,” they told us.

“It’s great for our waterways, but also for our stock health and wellbeing – it seems to be interrelated.”

Sam and Liz educated themselves about good practice for waterways by completing the Beef + Lamb NZ Land Environment Plan levels. Sam says his approach to farming has evolved.

“I was always focused on stock performance and improvements, but now it’s the bigger financial picture, environmental considerations and sustainable farming. I look at it like this: I treat my management practises as if I was constantly being viewed by anyone—urban, rural or foreign; I would like them to see happy, healthy stock and staff, clean fresh water, minimal hazards and to really portray the clean green image of NZ.”

The 2020 Ballance Farm Environment Award judges noted that the Bartons’ farm practices are guided by a comprehensive business plan and the couple was commended for continually improving their business skills through industry initiatives, self-development and professional learning.

By protecting waterways from sediment, Sam and Liz have managed to maintain or improve the population of freshwater crayfish in the creeks around the farm.

“If you go up the creek with the kids and a spotlight, it is just loaded, which is great to see and respect.”

Sam feels that little things can make big differences and they don’t have to affect your cash flow or your workload. He acknowledges it can be hard to change habits of previous generations, but he believes “minute changes can have a remarkable impact on the environment.”

“I know personally we are doing everything we can to protect waterways. I want things to look pretty, I want our stock to be happy and healthy and I want them to taste good. We give it our all and we do our best and I hope people respect that. We love our land and animals and people.”

To continue reading about how Sam and Liz are employing good practice to protect the environment at Montana Pastoral Ltd., visit www.orc.govt.nz/everyday-water-heroes

Farm facts:

- **553 hectares**, including **42 hectares** of trees and laneways
- High-altitude property ranging from **1,550-2,500ft**
- It’s warmer than expected due to shelter ranging from large areas of snow tussock and gullies, to a variety of plantations and shelter belts.
- **3,200 ewes, 880 hoggets, 100 mixed-aged cows**
- **30-40 hectares** of winter brassicas



Freshwater Visions

ORC is getting out and around the region right now to gather community input on Otago’s Freshwater Visions.

We’re working with our iwi partners and local communities to develop long-term freshwater visions and find out what people want for the future of waterways in their area, as part of the government’s Essential Freshwater reforms.

The input we gather through this consultation will form objectives in our new Regional Policy Statement (RPS). The RPS will set the environmental management direction for the region, and is scheduled for notification in June next year.

While we were on track to notify our RPS this year, a new requirement for regional policy statements (introduced

in the Essential Freshwater package) means we need to consult with our communities before we notify our RPS. That’s why we’re talking to people in all of our freshwater management units and rohe about their freshwater visions this year, ahead of schedule for our Land and Water Regional Plan.

Gwyneth Elsum, ORC’s General Manager Strategy, Policy and Science said “We’re keen to get input from every corner of the region—the more perspectives we hear, the better.

“In addition to being used for the RPS, the community freshwater visions will also be used for the new Land and Water

Regional Plan we have begun working on. We’ll use these visions to help set area-specific policies, limits and rules that work for each area in Otago, and which reflect community as well as central government expectations.”

ORC is holding community meetings around Otago to gather input into freshwater visions for the region’s catchments, and these meetings are underway now.

[See the schedule of meetings below to find your nearest meeting, or you can have your say online.](#)

Find out more at www.orc.govt.nz/OurWaterOurVision

Community meetings

Owaka

27 October, 5:30-7pm,
Owaka Memorial Hall

Oamaru

28 October, 12:30-2pm and
6-7:30pm, Oamaru Opera House

Palmerston

29 October, 12:30-2pm,
Palmerston Community House

Ranfurly

2 November, 12:30-2pm and
6-7:30pm, Ranfurly Town Hall

Cromwell

3 November, 12:30-2pm,
Cromwell Presbyterian Centre

Clyde

3 November, 5:30-7pm
Clyde Hall

Mosgiel

10 November, 12:30-2pm,
Mosgiel Coronation Hall

Dunedin

10 November, 6-7:30pm,
The Salvation Army Hall, NEV

Orokonui Ecosanctuary

11 November, 6:30-8pm,
Orokonui Ecosanctuary

Middlemarch

12 November, 12:30-2pm
and 6-7:30pm,
Middlemarch Memorial Hall

Ettrick

17 November, 5:30-7pm,
Ettrick Hall

Roxburgh

17 November 12:30-2pm,
Roxburgh Memorial Hall

Tapanui

18 November, 12:30-2pm
and 5:30-7pm, West Otago
Community Centre (Social Room)

Milton

19 November, 12:30-2pm,
Milton Coronation Hall

Balclutha

19 November, 6-7:30pm,
Cross Recreation Centre

Queenstown

24 November, 6-7:30pm,
St Peters Church Hall

Wanaka

25 November, 12:30-2pm and
6-7:30pm, Lake Wanaka Centre

Arrowtown

26 November, 12:30-2pm,
Arrowtown Bowling Club



Students from the Wakatipu High School Enviro group.

Eco-sourcing seeds and propagating plants

Otago Enviroschools are passionate about planting native trees and ensuring their local ecosystems are diverse and healthy. But, as we all know, the cost of plants quickly adds up. Many schools eco-source their own seeds and propagate plants so they can have the plants they need.

The Wakatipu High School Enviro group have been collecting seeds from local beech trees. They are going to propagate the trees to plant out in their school grounds and to gift to the people that support the school as a token of their thanks.

The Queen's High School Enviro Group have started a new initiative called 'Adopt a plant'. The seedlings from a local Kowhai tree are potted up, and the Envirogroup look after them until they are established. Other students from the school can then adopt a plant to take home and plant in their own garden.



Stay informed!

Visit our dedicated water website

We know that you want to find information about water quickly and easily, so we've created a water-specific site to help you find what you need to know faster. Check it out at www.goodwaterinotago.nz

The website is mobile-friendly, so you can access water info on the run. The website showcases 'Everyday Water Heroes', so if you know of someone in Otago who is doing great things to protect and enhance our waterways, please let us know by emailing water@orc.govt.nz



Now's the time to get your firewood

Buy and stack your firewood for next winter before Christmas, so that it has time to dry. Dry wood means more heat from your fire, and less smoke in the air.



Like Otago Regional Council on Facebook for regular updates and sign up to our monthly e-newsletter, On-Stream, by emailing water@orc.govt.nz



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