

# A fresh start for the lakes and landscapes of the Upper Waitaki

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# The old Mackenzie landscape: golden tussock, clear waters



## Today a declining ecosystem – rabbits, hieracium



## A practical vision for restoration



## Mackenzie farmers



- ❖ Conservation-minded w strong sense of place
- ❖ But viability of traditional dryland farming is a struggle
- ❖ So need irrigation, tourism and other diversification
- ❖ Key issue: intensive irrigated farming in conflict with conservation, tourism & community values



## Traditional land use declining economically & ecologically

- ❖ Has been productive since 1850s
- ❖ But poor soils, vegetation in decline, weed & pest control costs are high
- ❖ Average ROI = 1%; hard to service debt, and waste of NZ's resources
- ❖ Water valuable for electricity but now made available for irrigation
- ❖ But irrigation profitability varies - water not yet taken up in northern area
- ❖ Land abandonment



## Land use intensification



- ❖ Irrigated dairying in sensitive lake catchments was pioneered ahead of RMA controls
- ❖ Dairying or irrigation is not the issue: it's a question of how much, where placed, how controlled to protect other values.

## Latest irrigation applications imply major landscape change



- ❖ Downstream water impacts are now controlled by ECan
- ❖ But landscape and biodiversity impacts are subject to few controls
- ❖ Irrigable areas not yet applied for are still Crown land, but are under tenure review and could be privatized...

## This land needs managers



- ❖ Cannot just zone an ideal landscape – need wildling pine and rabbit control as well – and for that, the land needs revenues
- ❖ Farm enterprises could be a mix of irrigation, dryland pastoralism, conservation & tourism
- ❖ But this would need careful planning based around a shared vision of the future.



## Why the RMA isn't sufficient here



- ❖ National policies to change the behaviour of rural councils aren't available
- ❖ Weed and pest issues would overwhelm the intention of a protective zoning anyway
- ❖ The need is beyond protection – it is restoration and it costs money – so we need a strategy that can generate some



## A Mackenzie drylands park?



- ❖ English national park model: private land with a park agency offering management agreements
- ❖ Walking Access Commission approach
- ❖ New tourism models generating income for landowners



## Collaborative approach

- ❖ Shared Vision Forum agreed by 30 groups at Twizel in February
- ❖ Consensus rule
- ❖ Will develop vision, strategy, spatial plan & novel mechanisms
- ❖ Deep immersion in information – support of technical & advisory agencies as active observers
- ❖ Shared learning & sense of control is building trust, eliciting needed compromises



## Difficulties in getting to the start line



- ❖ Symposium – or Imposium
- ❖ Funding – especially for the legwork needed to get parties to agree to talk
- ❖ Different views of property rights – we have had to focus on non-RMA solutions
- ❖ CWMS vs “own nominees” rule
- ❖ Perception that roles of existing authorities are being threatened
- ❖ Divisive existing processes & practices
- ❖ Funding required a legal Trust entity



## CG's potential beyond Waitaki



- ❖ Where rules won't work, or existing property rights and governance systems conflict with sustainability goals and a new approach needed
- ❖ Examples: restoring degraded estuaries; QMS vs local fishing areas or MPAs; revisiting MSY.



Thank you!

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