

# Lindis Minimum Flows Workshop 1 (19 February 2009)

## MINUTES

[Meeting, attended by 25 people, began at approximately 1.10pm]

Apologies were made from Mike Floate, Ron, Helen, Tim, Peter and Lee Davis, Robert Gibson, John Perriam, Peter Holder, Mark Davidson, Ann and Ben Lucas, Gordon and James Lucas, Matt McCaughan, Anne and Elsie Davidson, Sue and Tim Rutherford, Richard Snow and Peter Morrison. (Apologies are made for any misspelt or omitted names).

Fraser McRae (Director Policy and Resource Planning) opened the workshop and described its intention and process: The Council has published a hydrological and ecological report but values other than these need to be considered as well, and the workshop is to identify these values. These will then be taken back, assessed, and minimum flow options that reflect these values will be presented at a subsequent workshop.

### Initial issues

Initial issues included:

- Irrigation is the major factor; it impacts so much on the community and its financial viability. Certainty of supply is a concern.
- There is not enough information on the economic impact of the minimum flow on the community, in particular on farming.
- Part of the river's success has been the priority system for takes. The fact that the number one priority take is the furthest downstream means there is water for other uses, such as recreation.
- Water quality is very high because the water edges are rocky/gravelly and are of no real farming use. Also, fertiliser use is negligible, and the margins are protecting the river's water quality. There is a lot of section 58 land and access issues are not problematic.
- Willows and weeds are not well managed. Also broom and gorse. Department of Conservation (DoC) are supposed to be up this year but they have not been seen. Flooding has been caused by blockages.
- Willows are impacting on the flow rates.
- Water quality around the rest area is poor due to a lack of toilet facilities.
- A major carpark is going in at Cluden Station.
- Giardia.
- Strong natural flows are good for fish and clearing the river.

### Resource Science presentations

Matt Dale, Water Resource Scientist, gave a PowerPoint presentation about the hydrological and ecological functions of the Lindis River. This was followed by Jens Rekker, Resource Scientist (Groundwater), and his presentation on the groundwater-surface water interaction of the Lindis River.

### Questions and comments from the floor

Questions and comments were then taken from the floor (paraphrased).

- Are Lake Dunstan and the Clutha River classified as understocked for exotic fish?  
*Fish & Game: Lake Dunstan has a good stock of fish but the tributaries have limitations: Cardrona, Lindis and Lowburn with low flows and Hawea with flushing and fluctuating flows. Concerned that it is highly probable that the Lindis River's capacity is limited. Fish fluctuations are natural and so variation for spawning and rearing potential is needed. With Contact Energy considering hydro-generation, this will further limit fish movement. There is a need to look for*

*an improved situation. Improved flows to the Lindis would enable it to act as a natural habitat for trout.*

- What has Fish & Game done for the Lindis in the past 60-100 years?  
*Fish & Game: We don't manage the Lindis fishery that way; we do it through meetings such as these and argue for better habitat conditions.*
- Trout could be released in the upper Lindis in their natural habitat for fish stocking purposes.  
*Fish & Game: Trout releases in rivers don't fare well. The fish generally keep moving downstream. It is probably a reasonable trout population in the upper catchment; most juveniles lost are coming from that resident population.*
- Camp Creek is a good spot to fish. In the Upper Lindis, you might get one fish every 2 miles.
- Is the aim of the minimum flow to be a flow for fish?  
*ORC: In short, no. It depends on what it is being managed for. It's what the community wants.*
- The flow recommended in the back of the report, is that a discussion point or what's proposed?  
*Department of Conservation: That's the flow to protect the aquatic ecosystem.*  
*Fish & Game: If the primary use of the Lindis is for trout habitat / fish spawning then the [Clutha-Lindis] connection is needed, 2 cumecs is needed or it won't work for adult fish. Juvenile fish need the river connections to be maintained. Where is the community going with water in this area? With the irrigation scheme? Looking at alternative water sources? It's also faced with the demise of water privileges. The minimum flow debate has to pick up.*
- We feel the timing of this meeting is very difficult and really not suitable; busiest three days (with the Omarama Sale).
- There are lots of rivers within half an hour of the river. Question for Fish & Game: what effect will it have on the total Lake Dunstan fishery if there's no minimum flow on the Lindis?  
*Fish & Game: We can't answer that. We work on the principle that you manage the components well. Upper Clutha tributaries have issues.*
- My brother recently caught a 4 lb trout in the Clutha: if I want to go fishing I go to the Clutha, not the Lindis.  
*ORC: The RMA won't let us sacrifice trout for abstraction. Spawning habitats already exist at the moment in the Lindis.*
- What exists at the moment has for 100 years. We want to use the river as it's been used for the past 100 years. If we leave the status quo, all abstraction water goes back into the river.
- What is the impact on deemed permits for minimum flows?  
*Fish & Game: Deemed permits will not be subject to the minimum flow till they expire in 2021.*  
*ORC: They will only apply on new consents after the minimum flow comes in.*
- With the minimum flow there would be 3-4 months without water?  
*ORC: No. it would be restricted, not stopped.*
- Regional Council presents information on fish, but not on irrigators. We need more information on economics.

- If the minimum flow was 0.75 [cumecs], we'd lose 14 heads today. This is probably the best water season in 10 years, and we've been rationing since January. Last season, restrictions came in by the end of November. You have to consider the social and economic costs.
- You need to get the best case and worst case scenarios.
- Drying the river destroys didymo. Didymo is there because of trout. If there is more trout, this will affect native fish.
- What's the impact on the natives from more trout?  
*ORC: Status quo, trout are already in the river.*
- If that's correct, then why is DoC going to great lengths to fence off stock from tributaries in tenure reviews but stock may pug up the land downstream to stop trout getting through?  
*DoC: Whatever creates a barrier protects the fish above it. Other natives also cause problems [i.e. eat other natives], e.g., koaro.*
- *Fish & Game: We're not trying to extend upstream. We're interested in the mid and lower stream habitat. Fish & Game do have a view on rivers not flowing in summer. The lower Fraser River was restored in co-operation with the scheme, it was a positive experience; it used to be drier for a longer distance than the Lindis.*
- But it has a dam, and you can control flows from a dam.  
*Fish & Game: CODC is taking about grants for water suppliers. Noted in the paper that the regional council can help with infrastructure.*
- *ORC: About fencing off streams: the trout in the streams already occupy the habitat they can get to. Also, we can't encourage pugging – stock disturbing riverbeds – it's not allowed by the Water Plan.*
- Don Clark's property at Bannockburn had a structure to stop trout getting upstream.  
*Fish & Game: Culverts have been used in other streams to keep trout out.*
- Is the public expectation that water will always flow at the bridge? It will take 50-60 years to see a change.  
*ORC: Deemed permits expire in 2021. RMA water permits have a maximum period of 35 years, and typically less.*
- Will the low flow affect ground takes not connected to the Lindis?  
*ORC: No.*
- How does the lower Lindis interact with Bendigo?  
*ORC: We think it's a highly localised connection, and there's not much interaction with Bendigo. The Clutha outwash seems to be a deep and separate system.*
- How far from the Lindis is the extent of connection?  
*ORC: For some gravels, the connection is 250-300 meters out, in some places closer. For silty gravels, there's not much effect.*
- I have a client who is taking 600 metres from the Lindis, and monitoring is required.  
*ORC: The call is taken on a case by case basis.*

- There are 15 takes in the tributaries to the Lindis [e.g. Dunstan Mountains, Richmond. Mt McCurdy Creek]. What's the council's view on minimum flows for takes on the tributaries?  
*ORC: Because a minimum flow is set for the catchment, it doesn't mean there'll be minimum flows on the tributaries. The top of the catchment may or may not be considered. We haven't taken a call regarding the catchment size and residual flow for each take. An example is the Taieri River, which has multiple minimum flows.*
- How are minimum and residual flows allocated?  
*ORC: The residual flow is the amount that goes past. It's set on a case by case basis. Community groups can manage takes so as not to breach the minimum flow. When it gets down to the trigger flow the group gets together and rosters.*
- And how is it sorted?  
*ORC: The community sorts it out together; it's been like that since the Catchment Board days. The groups are [currently] subcommittees of council. [Note: Plan Change 1C proposes community water management groups may take over rostering].*
- Would this involve people other than irrigators?  
*ORC: Not usually: permit holders determine how they operate within the framework set by the community. The council has no fixed view on the composition of committees.*

## **Small group session**

The small group session of the workshop then commenced, with the workshop participants breaking off into three groups to consider and discuss a variety of questions about the river and the catchment, and their values.

## **Further questions and comments**

Upon returning from the small group session there were further questions and comments:

- Policy 6.4.8 of the [ORC's] Water Plan says that minimum flows don't apply to community water supplies. I think we'd classify this as a community water supply after 100 years of continued use. The river is vital for the community, it's a total community water supply; the community would not be viable without the water.
- Section 5 of the RMA talks about sustainable and we've been sustainable for 100 years.
- How significant are the river values to the outside? We question that the Lindis is a valued fishery with only 150 fishing days a year. Think the survey is exaggerated. Sixty percent of lakes in New Zealand are in Otago, and there are lots of alternate fishing areas.
- Over 45 years I've seen 1 canoeist, a dozen campers and only a few fishermen on the mid-Lindis.
- Kai Tahu interests are in the upper Lindis, the walkway via the top of Hawea. It is not for canoe-landing or raupo.
- Remember that the river is an inland watercourse, not alpine. Also it's not feasible to dam. Bigger rivers have dams, such as the Manuherikia, Taieri and Fraser.
- The Lindis is one community, one river.

- Council should compensate for minimum flow effects.
- Under section 30(4)(c) of the RMA, regional councils have the responsibility for removing the willows. Willow are a form of land use, not a desirable one under the RMA. Don't let willows near the river, don't let cows near the river. Under 2.2.2.2 of the Water Plan ORC has responsibility for the lakes and rivers and margins, and the willows.
- We would like, before the next meeting, to have a plan to clear the willows, an economic impact of the minimum flow, take into account our investment and ways of mitigating the effects.
- We have had experiences with consultation before, with CODC and its landscape plan. We don't want the same to happen again. Make sure every person knows.

[Meeting ended at approximately 3.30pm]