



May 2013

NEW SLETTER



Lake Opuha at 50% full (before the rain on 4th-5th May)

Photo: Aimee Bennett

WELCOME

I can't promise that monthly newsletters are here to stay, but there are a couple of important messages that have prompted me to put this one out.

There are three topics I cover this time – firstly, a request for volunteers to participate in our ASM pilot this year; secondly, an update on the company restructuring plans and thirdly, a notice about our activities up at the lake over the next couple of months.

I expect that none of these topics have lit any fires of enthusiasm in you so far (!!) but I urge you please to take time to have a look over them as I believe they are all very important for us.

AUDITED SELF MANAGEMENT – PILOT PROGRAMME FOR 2013

We are planning to do a pilot Audited Self Management (ASM) system roll out this year and I am looking for ten landowners to participate in this programme with us.

Many of you will have heard about Audited Self Management – if not from me then from Peter previously or more recently at one of our IrrigationNZ/ECan information sessions. You may have come across it from within your own primary industry sector – DairyNZ, Fonterra, HortNZ etc.

I believe that ASM will be a fundamental cornerstone of our future operation and it will be essential for us all to be able to operate within the new Land & Water Regional Plan (LWRP). The LWRP was notified in August last year and, although the submissions and hearings process is still being worked through currently, the Plan is deemed to be operational now and we are already seeing the very significant implications of the Plan and its focus on 'managing within

limits'. There has been a major shift with the LWRP from a focus on limits of water quantity to limitations on water quality which has a direct impact on land use – what you actually do on your farm.

Most of our Opuha area is deemed to be either orange or red (on a grading scale) which reflects a high degree of concern over existing water quality and, under the Plan, means that any increase in land use intensity is likely to require a new land use consent which are either Non-Complying (for Red Zone) or Discretionary (Orange Zone). Recent experience has shown that these consents don't come easily with high hurdles to cross as far as demonstrating that the proposed activity does not increase nutrient loading in the catchment.

Under the LWRP, there are special provisions for members of an irrigation scheme. If the scheme has nutrient load limit provisions within their scheme consent, members are not required to obtain land use consents as long as they met certain requirements. One of the key requirements is that the landowner has a Farm Environment Plan that meets the LWRP requirements and that the Farm Plan is externally audited each year. This is ASM.

We are proposing to implement a scheme wide Audited Self Management system that will meet the requirements of the LWRP and that, in the longer term, will put us in a position to provide our members with more flexibility regarding farming activities than if they are operating 'alone'. We would also expect that running a scheme-wide ASM system will be more efficient for landowners than having to do it themselves.

Request for Participants

We are looking for willing landowners to participate in the pilot rollout of our Audited Self Management Programme this year.

"It is inevitable that, sooner or later, everyone will have to be part of this ..."

Please refer to the newsletter article for details.

We have previously done a reasonable amount of groundwork regarding an ASM system for Opuha but we decided to postpone any implementation until the LWRP was published. In the meantime there has also been some very good work by IrrigationNZ to refine an ASM system that will provide some

consistency across schemes and that also provides for the fact that in many cases, landowners may already have some form of ASM or Farm Environmental Plan in place through their respective industry bodies. We have now decided that we should move ahead with a pilot rollout this year and then next year we will look to expand it further.

As well as getting our whole programme underway and providing an opportunity for keen landowners to get onboard, one of the other reasons for the pilot approach is so we can determine the resources and system we will need within Opuha Water to manage ASM on a full scheme scale.

I am looking for ten landowners representing a good spread of land use and geographic location within our area who are keen to come on board and be part of this initial pilot programme. It truly is a case of 'sooner or later' so I'm looking for those who want to be in the sooner group.

We have planned the following sessions to get things underway and I would require those wanting to participate to be available on these dates.

Tuesday 25th June – introductory evening at Opuha House

Monday 1st July, 9am to 3pm – first workshop to prepare Farm Plans

We will have external advisors at these sessions to assist us with this initial work

After the workshop we will be able to work with individuals to finalise plans and to organise a visit to the farm during the early part of the irrigation season.

We would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in joining this pilot programme. If we get more than ten responses, we will need to be selective as we are limited in the number we can manage initially. Our selection will be based on trying to get a good spread of land use and locations around our catchment.

Please contact Christine at the office, Ph 03 6147801 or christine@opuha.co.nz if you are interested in participating or Tony (Ph 027 2330412) or tony@opuha.co.nz if you have any questions.

Company Restructuring

We are finalising the plan and programme for restructuring Opuha Water Ltd to simplify the organisation to encompass all irrigators into one organisation. It sounds easy enough but those of you that saw my presentations last year might appreciate that it is quite a complicated process with a number

of specific steps and shareholder approvals required along the way.

We will be communicating with scheme Boards and shareholders as we move along with this process which we are attempting to finalise before the AGM in November.

Lake Storage, Dam and Power Station Operation

The lake level lowered to just under 50% full by the end of April however the rain in the weekend of 4-5th May was very heavy up behind the dam (75mm in less than one day) and this increased the lake level by 1.5m to about 62% over the following days.

We are planning to carry out some overdue maintenance inspections on the penstock (the main outlet from the lake to the power station) in June. To enable divers to work up at the lake to isolate the penstock, we require the lake to be no higher than 50% full. At this stage it is still our intention to carry out this inspection and we will therefore be attempting to lower the lake and keep it around 50% full. While we would normally be storing all the water we can at this stage, we consider that the inspection work is very important and we are actually in the best position regarding lake level that we have been for several years. On this basis we believe that we need to use the water and lower the lake until we have finished the inspection.

We are also planning to carry out extensive inspection and maintenance work in the power station over a two week period encompassing the penstock inspection.

In preparation for this maintenance work we have recently completed certification tests on the crane out on the intake tower which required a five tonne lift to be carried out. Steve and the team successfully undertook this tricky operation that involved floating a 5000 litre tank out to the tower, filling it with water and then lifting it with the crane while the Crane Inspector measured deflection of the crane beam and structure.

Photos below illustrate the stages of the operation.

Regards



Tony McCormick
Ph 027 233 0412
tony@opuha.co.nz

