

NOTICE TO OPUHA & OPIHI RIVER USERS AND ADJACENT RESIDENTS

FLUSHING FLOW SCHEDULED FOR THURSDAY 27TH FEBRUARY 2014

Opuha Water Ltd* (OWL) is planning to release flows of up to 40 cumecs from the Opuha Dam starting at 8am on Thursday 27th February 2014. The release will result in a rapid increase in the flow in the Opuha River and the Opihi River below Raincliff and the flow is likely to remain elevated above the present flows for approximately 20 hours.

During the period of the flow release, the flow and level in the river may change rapidly - especially in the Opuha River and the Opihi River immediately below Raincliff. While the actual flow rates will not be more than might be expected following typical moderate seasonal rain periods, river users are advised to take care in and around the river from Thursday morning to early Friday because the rate of change will be higher than typically experienced.

The main purpose of this high flow release (flushing flow) is to remove accumulations of didymo that are present in the upper reaches of the Opuha River prior to March 1st when OWL is required under its consent to lift the minimum river flow reaching the SH1 Bridge at Temuka from 3.5 cumecs to 7 cumecs. From experience, even this small increment in flow required under the consent is highly likely to dislodge significant amounts of didymo that will be carried slowly downstream over a period of up to 7 days. Without elevated flows it is unlikely to be passed beyond the lagoon. By carrying out the controlled flushing flow and then maintaining the higher flows for a period of up to 20 hours, it is intended that the majority of the didymo debris will be flushed right through the river system and beyond the river mouth in a much shorter time.

In February 2013, OWL carried out a similar flushing flow trial but did not sustain the high flows beyond the initial three hour period. After the flushing flow, concerns were raised that the flow trial had not been of sufficient strength to move the didymo debris right through the system and there was a significant amount that remained in the lower reaches and lagoon that caused problems for locals and river users in this area for sometime after the flush.

In response to these concerns the intention this time is to maintain elevated flows beyond the initial flush period in an effort to avoid the problems encountered last year.

Enquiries should be directed to Opuha Water Ltd, Tony McCormick, Ph 027 2330412, email tony@opuha.co.nz.

*Opuha Water Ltd own and operate the Opuha Dam near Fairlie. The dam captures and stores water from small rivers and tributaries including the North and South Opuha and Ribbonwood Stream. The lake created by the dam covers approximately 700ha and can store up to 72 million cubic metres. Water released from the lake via the dam structure flows into the Opuha River which joins the Opihi River at Raincliff.