

## Questions & Answers

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### **1. How polluted is Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere?**

NIWA's 2010 Lake Water Quality Report ranked lakes by trophic level index and rated Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere at 6.9 – the worst in New Zealand of 140 lakes.

Most of the poor quality lakes are small (less than 10 km<sup>2</sup>). All of the other lakes that were more than 100 km<sup>2</sup> were in the top 10% and had a trophic level index of less than 2.2. Other large lakes with pollution problems are Rotorua (80 km<sup>2</sup>) with a trophic level index of 4.7 and Wairarapa (77km<sup>2</sup>) with a trophic level index of 5.0.

### **2. Why is the Government and others providing funding to clean up Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere?**

It is the largest lake in Canterbury and an important link in the chain of coastal lagoons and estuaries along the east coast of the South Island. It is an internationally significant wetland for wildlife and supports a rich biological environment. It is a tribal taonga to Ngāi Tahu and the lake bed was vested in Ngāi Tahu in their 1998 Treaty of Waitangi Deed of Settlement.

### **3. Why is there poor water quality in the Lake?**

Land-use changes in the catchment and clearing of wetlands have hastened the lake's deterioration in water quality with high nutrients and sediments. Damage to weed beds in the lake dates back to the Wahine storm of 1968 and their limited regeneration is also partly attributed to a decline in water quality.

### **4. What does the Lake Ellesmere Water Conservation Order recognise and what were the changes sought?**

Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora is subject to a Water Conservation Order (WCO) which protects lake levels and the outstanding wildlife habitat of the lake. In December 2010 the Department of Conservation and Ngāi Tahu applied for a variation to the existing WCO. The changes sought include changing the name to Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihora in the Order, adding another period for opening the lake (to facilitate fish migration) and adding further categories of outstanding features including:

- Wetlands
- Customary fisheries
- Ngāi Tahu historical, spiritual and cultural characteristics
- Significance in accordance with tikanga Ngāi Tahu, including in respect of kaitiakitanga and mahinga kai

## **5. What was the process for making changes to the Lake Ellesmere Water Conservation Order?**

Any application for a water conservation order (or a variation to an Order) that is for a water body in the Canterbury region must be submitted to Environment Canterbury to consider. This was made possible by the Government passing the Environment Canterbury (Temporary Commissioners and Improved Water Management) Act in 2010.

The application for a change to the Ellesmere Water Conservation Order was submitted to Environment Canterbury to consider in December 2010.

Environment Canterbury publicly notified the application in January 2011 and appointed a hearing committee to hear the application and submissions. Hearings were held in late May and early June 2011. Environment Canterbury provided its report and recommendations to the Minister for the Environment on 15 July 2011.

The Government agreed to the changes to the Order that Environment Canterbury had recommended. These were approved on 22 August and gazetted on 25 August 2011. The changes to the Order take effect 28 days after the date of the notice in the Gazette.

## **6. What will the money be spent on?**

Now that the Memorandum of Understanding has been signed, the first task is to develop a detailed plan for the first two years. This will include:

- A plan to accelerate the restoration of the ecosystem's health;
- The process to restore and enhance specific cultural sites and mahinga kai
- Activities to protect and restore the lake margin wetland habitats, existing indigenous vegetation and wildlife and restoration of specific lowland tributary streams and riparian habitats;
- Activities to improve the lake and catchment management practices by focusing on sustainable land use and drainage practices.
- Developing a robust monitoring and investigations programme.

## **7. Where has the Government funding come from?**

\$6 million has come from the Fresh Start for Fresh Water Clean Up Fund. The remainder is made up of two grants from the Community Environment Fund. Te Ara Kakariki: Greenway Canterbury will receive \$30,000 over three years and Te Waihora Ellesmere Trust will receive \$50,000 also over two years to help them restore water quality and natural habitats around the lake.

## **8. What other funding is being given?**

- Environment Canterbury's commitment to the Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere clean up is \$3.5 million over two years.
- Fonterra is contributing \$1.3 million for practical on-farm assistance to farmers to reduce nutrient leaching.
- Ngāi Tahu is contributing \$500,000.
- Selwyn District Council, Waihora Ellesmere Trust and Lincoln University will also contribute funding but details are yet to be confirmed.
- There will also be a substantial commitment to the clean up from local volunteers.