

## **Water Trust**

The Trustees of the Ashburton Community Water Trust were appointed by the Ashburton District Council.

Not an uncommon practice when district leaders are asked to give their time to help find solutions to problems on behalf of their community.

The Ashburton Community Water Trust was set up by the Ashburton District Council with several objectives around the principal goals of promoting wise water use and supporting the development of the water resource for the benefit of the Ashburton District Community.

This was on the back of the district council clearly identifying that continuing the development of our water resource was the best way to continue economic, social and cultural development for our district.

The trust has identified three principal ways of achieving this.

1. Support proposals to bring irrigation to the remaining 90,000ha of flat unirrigated land in the District. Recognising that irrigated farms spend on average 5 to 10 times/ha on goods and services than do Dryland sheep farmers. This alone could increase the quantum of money going through Ashburton by \$250m.
2. Develop enough generated capacity to give the district some self reliance in electricity; given that the nations supply appears to be a bit dicey.
3. Bring some sensible resolution to the problems in the Ashburton River.

All three objectives will be resolved by the development of storage. Storage gives reliability to run water supply for irrigation and generation and could, with some infrastructure development, help provide alternatives to abstraction from the Ashburton River.

The trust has looked at various options for storage reservoirs along with the Canterbury Strategic Water Study.

Sites such as the Stour were investigated but discussions with our local Forest and Bird members have identified several areas of high conservation value in the upper reaches of the Ashburton and any attempts to build reservoirs there would be divisive for the community.

The use of Lake Coleridge would appear to be less contentious and is in the trust's view our best solution. Coleridge has the advantages of greater energy generation potential, lower environment impacts and better reliability.

To ensure to use of Coleridge accrues benefit to this district, we need to have the consents to take water from the Rakaia; hence the importance of the Barrhill Chertsey scheme and the Rakaia Terrace project.

On-farm storage will complement these developments.

All of this has been reported to the Ashburton District Council at various times. I have always understood those reports to be in the public domain. The District Council has an important role to play enabling and encouraging economic development.

Enterprise Ashburton and the District Council should be congratulated for working towards providing opportunities for future generations in this district.

I have always believed it is self evident that the prosperity of Ashburton is closely linked to the widespread use of irrigation in the district. The partnership of our farmers with the skill and enterprise of our Ashburton marketers, processors, manufacturers, technicians and services creates a unique production base.

The Ashburton Community Water Trust has been set up and tasked with building on our current assets for the benefit of future generations; so that they may look back, as we do to the pioneers of the RDR and other irrigation developments and be grateful for that foresight.

**Ian MacKenzie, Chairman ACWT**

**From Ashburton Guardian (Letter to the Editor – November 4<sup>th</sup> 2008)**