

**Community Board Draft
Annual Plan Submission
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Introduction

The Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network

The Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network (OHRN) is an umbrella organization that facilitates and supports the values, efforts, and needs of our communities along the River. The OHRN is made up of representatives from thirteen community groups in the Ōpāwaho Heathcote catchment and the Avon-Heathcote Estuary.

Our Vision is; *‘An ecologically healthy river that people take pride in, care for and enjoy.’*
Our Purpose is; *‘To facilitate a collaborative network which advocates for the regeneration of the whole of the Opawaho Heathcote River.’*

The OHRN provides a voice for local river-care organizations and the communities. It collaborates and advocates with decision making organizations including Christchurch City Council (CCC) and Environment Canterbury (ECan).

Just as the CCC wish to focus on a collaborative approach, the OHRN seeks to work with the CCC, ECan, Ngai Tahu, Community Boards, community groups and other agencies to develop an integrated approach to the management of the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River.

The Ōpāwaho Heathcote River

The Ōpāwaho Heathcote River, including many of its tributaries, has some of the poorest water quality in the City of Christchurch. The River has a complex catchment which includes part of the Port Hills, industrial areas, and concentrated urban and residential zones.

The River’s ecological health is under pressure from stormwater discharges contaminated by copper, zinc and a very large amount of suspended sediments from the recent Port Hills fire. Other sources of contamination include sewage overflows from the City’s wastewater system.

Like many lowland rivers, the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River suffers from ‘urban stream syndrome.’ This is an indicator of the cumulative effects of activities and water management within its catchment over the last 150 years. This has resulted in an overall low baseline of ecological, water and sediment quality, and cultural health. Erosion of loess from the Port Hills, has been exacerbated by the recent fires. The landscape changes from the earthquakes have compounded these impacts.

It is important to stress that the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River is part of a larger landscape system that connects the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River and the Avon Ōtākaro River to the Avon Heathcote Estuary. Here the rivers toxic contaminants can bio-accumulate in filter feeders and adversely affect the animal and plant life that depend on them.

The Estuary is significant nationally as a coastal wetland and is now internationally significant as the only urban wetland in Australasia to be part of East Asian-Australasian Flyway Network for migratory birds.

The health of the estuary depends on the cultural and ecological health of its tributary rivers and the catchments that surround them.

General Priorities Sought

We acknowledge the huge amount of work that has been and is being carried out in relation to the development of constructed wetlands, retention basins and bank remediation in the catchment to help improve both water quality and water quantity issues. Despite this it is essential that Community Boards are a key driver of further change to improve the health of the environment, the river which flows through resident's daily lives and the communities that are connected to it.

- The OHRN would like to emphasise the need for the Community Boards to make explicit commitment in their Annual Plan to improve the health of the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River and its environs.
- To work with: the community; community organisations the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network, Christchurch West Melton Zone Committee; businesses in the catchment; Ngai Tahu; ECan and CCC to improve the health of the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River.
- The OHRN seeks the development of a whole of Catchment Management Plan for the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River. We stress that it is essential to have a whole of catchment approach as we are dealing with a system from its spring source to the sea.

Specific Priorities Sought for Each Community Board

Waipuna/Halswell-Hornby-Riccarton

The OHRN would like to see a focus on reducing sedimentation in the Cashmere Stream and its role in contributing to the poor health of the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River.

Waihoru/Cashmere-Spreydon

The OHRN acknowledge the support we have received from you over the years. However, we are disappointed to note that in your Annual Plan there is no reference or priority assigned to the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River and the issues that arise from its poor state of health.

Waikura/Linwood-Central- Heathcote

We acknowledge and applaud the focus of this Community Board on the issues relating to the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River with the inclusion in the Annual Plan of a Ōpāwaho to Ihutai - an Integrated Catchment Management Plan for the Lower Ōpāwaho Heathcote River. It is important to understand in the catchment system nothing operates in isolation and issues that occur in the Lower Ōpāwaho Heathcote River are mostly generated upstream.

Issue for Focus

The following factors are applicable to all three Community Boards along the river.

- 1) Sediment/loess:
Identifying sediment from the Port Hills as a key polluter of the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River and work with agencies and community groups to develop actions to improve this.
- 2) Weeds:
There are a range of weed species that are a problem both on the banks and in the actual river. These include Yellow Flag Iris, Hanging Sedge, Reed Canary Grass, Reed Sweet Grass and Spartina.
- 3) Stormwater Pollution - Residential/Industrial:
Help to encourage behaviour change of residents. Stormwater from residential properties flows straight into the Ōpāwaho Heathcote River.
- 4) Ōpāwaho Heathcote Stormwater Management Plan:
Involvement in the consultation process for the Ōpāwaho Heathcote Stormwater Management Plan which is to be produced under the new CCC Global Stormwater Consent.
- 5) Protecting Spring Sources along the Catchment

Thank for the opportunity to provide a submission



Annabelle Hasselman
Chairperson
Ōpāwaho Heathcote River Network