

**This is the first update on Wairarapa's proposed regional water storage scheme in quite a while. But don't let that make you think not much has been happening. The project has made excellent progress over the past 12-months and we are well positioned heading into the New Year to turn, the Water Wairarapa scheme from being a proposal to closer to a reality.**

### Wairarapa Water Ltd

A significant development in the second half of 2017 has been the establishment of Wairarapa Water Ltd, the entity that will raise equity from water users. This initiative will ensure that all Wairarapa water users are able to invest in and have a voice in the running of the scheme. The formation of Wairarapa Water Ltd is being overseen by an independent group, chaired by Tim Lusk, a former chief executive of Meridian Energy and a current director on the Environmental Protection Agency.

Made up of a mix of farming and business professionals, the group will also help drive the farmer and water user engagement process which will get underway in the New Year. Other members include: Simon Campbell, Brett Gould, John Monaghan, Andrew Patrick, Susan Stephens, John Stevenson, and John Tulloch.



Tim Lusk

### Where are we heading?



With a huge volume of work having been completed, there is light at the end of the tunnel. Much of the remaining investigative work centres around working with the regulatory environment which will impact on water reliability and land use activity. The potential effects of this are already starting to be played out in other parts of the country and here in Wairarapa through the Whaitua process.

Add to the mix the impact of climate change and it becomes very evident that water users face some very big challenges in the future. It makes it all the more important to understand the forecasted effect to the region were the project not to

proceed, which is another piece of work that is programmed to be done.

As the work is undertaken, the aim is to provide all water users with sufficient information to participate in an equity raising process. This demonstration of a commitment to the scheme is critical to proceeding to the next stage, the remainder of the feasibility investigations.

What is clear, is that the whole of the region will benefit from the Water Wairarapa scheme, so if it is to ultimately get built it will require the rural and urban community to support it.

### Farmer engagement

Demand for water from the Water Wairarapa scheme stems from a range of farmer and other water users such as rural, municipal and environmental. For individual farmers or landowners, be they current irrigators or not, the decision to invest in the scheme will require good information. To support this decision making process we are planning a comprehensive engagement process involving a number of channels and activities. These will include farming stakeholder briefings, hall and shed meetings and one-on-one visits. You will be notified about these closer to the time.



## Change of government

The change in government and announcements about removing funding for irrigation has triggered speculation about future funding of Water Wairarapa and other similar projects. We don't think that the new Labour-NZ First Coalition adversely impacts the project.

The Government has indicated that it will be honouring existing Crown Irrigation investment commitments. Our current funding agreement takes us through to August 2018, and it is business as usual for the project team.

A \$1 billion annual fund for regional development, in addition to funding for other large-scale capital projects, is positive. There is strong evidence that the scheme will generate significant long-term economic benefits and build regional resilience.

The establishment of the Minister of Climate Change Issues is also encouraging, as this project will be a major tool in helping to mitigate some of the challenges resulting from predicted changing weather patterns which will impact on both rural and urban communities.

## Climate change - challenges and opportunities

If we get prepared now, we will be much better off, was the clear message to come out of a climate change presentation to the Wairarapa Chamber of Commerce 'business breakfast' in October.

This region, more than most in New Zealand, according to the NIWA Climate change projections and impacts report, is expected to experience some significant changes.

Climate scientist Dr Alex Pezza told the audience that Wairarapa will be much hotter and therefore drier within the next 15-20 years, compared with today.

But while more droughts may limit pasture production and crop growth, warmer temperatures may allow for different crops to be grown and multiple rotations. Countering this is reduced water reliability. As well as new agriculture, likely to feature less stock and more horticulture, there will be tourism and business opportunities, but these will require reliable water.

### Heating up

#### Hotter

1°C warmer by 2040  
(+30 days in excess of 25 degrees/year)

#### Drier

5% drier by 2040  
(a normal year will look like a drought year of today)



## Fresh produce

A recent report by Horticulture New Zealand demonstrates just how transformational the Water Wairarapa scheme could be to this region. The report, ("New Zealand domestic vegetable production: the growing story"), describes a "perfect storm" of urban sprawl and changes in climate threatening to seriously restrict fresh fruit and vegetable production in traditional growing areas, particularly South Auckland. With Wairarapa predicted to have growing conditions in a generation like Hawke's Bay and Bay of Plenty of today, the Ruamāhanga Valley is well placed to become the new fresh fruit and vegetable basket of the North Island. We've just got to supplement it with reliable water.

### Who can help

Greg Ordish is available to answer questions, provide information and share experience from other regions. We also value your feedback.

**Contact:**  
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or phone **06 826 1513**



Other useful sources of information include:  
**www.irrigationnz.co.nz**    **www.smartirrigation.co.nz**