

New community group proposes action on wilding conifers



Cambrian Valley, March 2000.



The same view of the Cambrian Valley today, showing quite dramatically the spread of wilding pines. *Photos courtesy of Grahame Sydney.*

The Central Otago community has, at Council's lead, responded to growing public concern about the accelerating spread of wilding pines in the district by establishing an action group.

The group will be known as the Central Otago Wilding Conifer Control Group Incorporated or WCG for short. The group includes representatives from all the main interest groups including Federated Farmers, Forest Owners Association, environmental groups and representatives from local and central government.

Wilding conifers have been a feature of Central Otago for many years, however it is only relatively recently with the rapid expansion of the area affected by wildings that there has been an appreciation amongst the wider community of their potential threat.

The main concerns centre on their potential adverse effects on landscape values, water yield from catchments, extensive grazing values, recreation, nature conservation and biodiversity. They also contribute significantly to fire risk.

Central Otago district is particularly susceptible to wilding conifers and to these adverse effects. A large proportion of our area is tussock country where conifers can readily establish naturally from seeds blown from mature trees. One of the district's most outstanding and differentiating features is its open relatively treeless landscape, "a world of difference" that attracts visitors from afar. As well as providing a draw card for tourism, these landscapes provide valuable extensive grazing for farmers.

Central Otago is the driest district in New Zealand and water harvested from catchments such as the Manuherikia is rapidly becoming the "new gold". Conifer forests are known to have a significant reducing effect on water yield, particularly in dry regions.

Dominance of largely indigenous vegetation by wilding conifers would have a transforming effect on indigenous ecosystems in the district with the associated loss of native flora and fauna, some of which is already threatened.

If trees stayed where they were planted there wouldn't be a problem. The problem stems from the uncontrolled nature of the spread.

The longer the uncontrolled spread is allowed to continue unchecked the greater the area affected by seed rain from mature trees is compounded. Trees also spread into inaccessible country where the cost of removal becomes higher.

Experience in other districts, such as in Queenstown Lakes with its Wakatipu Wilding Conifer Control Group, indicates that the best way to address the problem is a partnership approach between land owners and public agencies, supported by volunteers. The Central Otago WCG plans to draw up a strategic plan for controlling wilding conifers in the district, which will include setting priorities for control, establishing costings and identifying funding sources.

Anyone who is interested in participating in the group should contact the Wilding Control Group at wcg@codc.govt.nz.



From the Mayor's Desk

Welcome back. I hope you have all recovered from your festive activities, that your batteries are recharged and that you are ready for any new opportunities that this year may present. I am certainly looking forward to tackling the challenges that face our district in 2014.

The elections held in October 2013 have given the Community Boards and the Council a good mix of new and old members. There is enough diversity

amongst the elected members to stimulate good debate and my early observation is that this has brought freshness to the collective thinking and solutions sought to the issues that come before the Boards and Council. I really look forward to working with all the elected members over the next three years as we search for simple and sensible outcomes that everyone understands.

Having recently voted us into office it is important that you do not turn off for the next three years. You can continue to be

involved in the decision-making process by staying in touch with the people that you voted for. Experience has shown me that a simple phone call is still an effective way of reminding elected members that you are out there and that you are interested in what they are up to. The earlier that you share your view the more likely that it will be taken into consideration by those making the decisions on your behalf.

Of course with all the new ways of sharing information, websites, email and the many form of social media, staying in touch and staying involved is so much easier. We have responded to the opportunities that these more instant forms of communication provide and we are putting a lot of effort into improving our web-based presence. All elected members have contact details on the website so please take advantage of them.

We intend becoming far more interactive with you and it would be fantastic to see a big shift toward people logging in on a regular basis and seeing what the Council is up to.

Tony Lepper
Central Otago Mayor

www.codc.govt.nz



Have you checked out our new website?

- Our home page is regularly changing with fresh news items and spotlight features.
- Full Council and Community Board agendas are now available online.
- You'll find both bio information and contact details for your Council and Community Board members should you wish to discuss your ideas, issues or concerns.
- You can lodge general feedback, information and service requests online, plus we have a link to a smart phone/tablet app 'Fix My Street' you can download to report issues.
- If you missed our Noticeboard in the CO News, or are an out-of-town ratepayer wanting to keep in touch with Council news and notices, our weekly public notices and current consultation topics are posted on: www.codc.govt.nz/consultation

We aim to keep building and improving our site and have already identified a programme of work to roll out enhancements to the site, but feedback and suggestions from the community are also always welcome. Please email mkd@codc.govt.nz with feedback or send us feedback via our 'General Feedback' online form.

Have your say!

Local Alcohol Policy

The Central Otago District Council Draft Local Alcohol Policy (LAP) is currently out for public consultation with the submission period closing on Thursday 6 February 2014. Find out more at www.codc.govt.nz/consultation.



Did you know?

If you want to accommodate fee-paying guests but don't live at the house permanently, you will need a resource consent, regardless of the number of people it accommodates. Please familiarise yourself with our information regarding Travellers' Accommodation regulations on our website: www.codc.govt.nz/services/planning/travellers-accommodation

Arts Funding

Applications are now open for the latest round of Creative New Zealand funding for art and cultural projects. Forms are available at your local Council offices, on Council's website (codc.govt.nz/funding) or by emailing judith.whyte@codc.govt.nz. Applications close on Friday 14 February 2014 at 4pm. The next funding round is in September 2014.

Rates Reminder

Due to recent changes at NZ Post we wish to remind ratepayers that it is your responsibility to get your payment to us by the due date, not in the post by the due date.

Alexandra Water

Water quality has topped the priority issues as rated by the community in our Residents' Satisfaction and Opinion Survey for many years now, especially ranking highly in the feedback we receive from Alexandra residents. We know this is a hot topic and you want action.

Several years of work have gone into investigating options for the Alexandra Water Source Upgrade and have really come down to two options: bringing the existing site up to drinking water standards at an estimated cost of \$8.5 million or establishing a new Clutha River or Lake Dunstan water source, with an estimated cost in the range of \$11.5-\$14.5 million.

Council will be consulting on the Alexandra Water Source Upgrade this year.

In the lead-up to the formal consultation period in March we will be communicating with the community via multiple channels

and we encourage all district residents and ratepayers to take an interest.

Keep an eye out on our website (www.codc.govt.nz/alexwater), in your local papers, and on Council's newly launched Facebook page for information:

- giving you an overview of the investigations and reports that have got us to this point;
- the issues and risks with the current supply;
- the opportunities and risks associated with the improvement options;
- and our legislative requirements under national Drinking Water Standards.

We want you to have the full picture and time to digest all the information so you are well-informed when we invite you to give feedback to the Three Waters Infrastructure Committee.



Two new trails open

Two new cycling and walking tracks in Central Otago were officially opened late last year – the Roxburgh Gorge Trail and the Clutha Gold Trail. The two trails, which were officially opened by Prime Minister John Key on 24 October 2013, join the Ngā Haerenga New Zealand Cycle Trail network.

Those who have walked and cycled the trails are waxing lyrical about the experience. Have you walked or biked either of them yet?



Prime Minister John Key cuts the ribbon at the Roxburgh end of the Clutha Gold Trail, watched on by Clutha Gold Trail Chair Rod Peirce and Roxburgh Gorge Trail Chair Stephen Jeffery, as well as a strong media presence.

Pack a Passport for the ride

Riders and walkers can purchase a combined passport for both trails as a souvenir of their trip. The passport includes information about particular points of interest along the trails including heritage sites, the history of the area, the wildlife and the landscape. Riders and walkers can collect 'stamps' in the form of a rubbing at four stops along each trail.

Passports cost \$25 and can be purchased at Alexandra i-SITE, Cromwell i-SITE, Ranfurly i-SITE and Roxburgh and Lawrence Information Centres.

To find out more about the trails visit www.cluthagold.com and www.roxburghgorge.com or pick up a brochure from your local visitor centre.

Support our trails' upkeep

Roxburgh Gorge and Clutha Gold Trails have been eight years in the making and would not have been created without the generous support of landowners and volunteers.

Volunteers will be looking after these trails into the future and need the support of riders and walkers. By purchasing a maintenance tag and/or a passport users are contributing to the maintenance and ongoing enhancements of the trails.

The contribution is \$25 per person per annum and \$50 per family per annum. You receive a tag which can be either attached to your bike or your bag for walking. It is an annual contribution from 1 October to 30 September. Tags are individually numbered and are a different colour per year.

Contributions can be made at any Central Otago i-SITES/Visitor Centres as well as at the Lawrence Information Centre.





Gearing Up For Change

From 1 July this year our refuse will be collected every two weeks instead of weekly. Central Otago District Council is one of a number of South Island councils who, in a bid to reduce waste and provide efficient and cost-effective services, are adopting a fortnightly refuse collection. Other councils including Southland, Christchurch, Westland, Gore and the Clutha districts are managing to reduce their waste and keep their costs down by collecting refuse only fortnightly, so we can make it work here too.

Here are a few of the enquiries we have received recently, along with some solutions.

“I live in a household of five people. I won't be able to reduce my waste by 50% overnight, it will take years.”

It will take a change in habits but a waste audit on household bins clearly shows that nearly all of the stuff in our wheelie bins is recyclable or organic. Using the available

recycling facilities, composting the organics in your garden or taking greenwaste to the transfer station are simple solutions to reduce your waste by more than half.

Using cloth nappies will save your family thousands of dollars, remove the several hundred tonnes of poop and plastic waste to landfill and avoid any odour issues

associated with putting human waste in your wheelie bin. If you need to use disposables, flushing the nappy solids down the toilet first and bagging the nappy will significantly reduce the odour.

“I have a young family with children in nappies. Two weeks between rubbish collections in Central's summer. You are joking.”

“My service is going to be halved, does that mean my rates will be halved too?”

We are putting out a new contract so we do not know the price of that contract yet. However, we anticipate that the 2014/15 rates costs will remain about the

same as this year. One of the reasons to shift to a fortnightly refuse collection is to avoid the significant increase in costs if we were to continue to provide the same weekly refuse collection service.

Most of the additional holiday season waste is recyclable so you will have to separate these things out and use the recycling facilities more.

Food waste can be avoided by using the leftovers or composting it. Transfer stations will continue to operate as usual and are available if you still need to dispose of the extra material to landfill. Charges will apply.

“We have family staying with us over the holidays, plus all the extra festive season rubbish. We really need our bin picked up each week.”

We have been gearing up for this change for a number of years now by increasing the number of recycling facilities in the district and including glass drop-offs in all areas. Additional recycling crates for those in the household kerbside collection area of Alexandra, Cromwell and Clyde are available from Waste Busters for \$20 a bin. Recycling collections will continue to be made weekly in those areas.

“To cope with the reduced service I need greater recycling capacity. What is Council doing to encourage and increase recycling?”

Further resources

More information to help you gear up for change is available on the waste minimisation pages on the Council website at www.codc.govt.nz/zerowaste.



Get a biography for summer

The range of biographies in our Central Otago libraries is varied. You will find in our collections biographies of sports people, politicians, historical figures, cultural icons, celebrities and more. You will discover factual information, humour and scandal.

Our librarians have selected 23 of the latest titles on the shelves to profile the biography collection on our website this month. Visit www.codc.govt.nz/libraries to get a just a taste of what's available and then follow the links to the catalogue to put a hold on a title that you think will satisfy your appetite for a good read this summer.

Choose to be outraged with (or at) Paul Henry, read Bear Grylls' tales of adventure, read of a real-life "Mary Poppins", discover the man behind the world's most famous puppets, laugh along with comedian Jennifer Saunders or be inspired by the story of the youngest Nobel Peace Prize nominee.

Keep an eye out on our website for future sections profiling other library collections and don't forget (if you haven't already) to like Central Otago Libraries on Facebook to follow posts about new and recommended books, library events and activities.



Manuherikia Catchment Project

In October 2021 mining permits, currently used mainly for irrigation, are due to expire in the Manuherikia and Ida Valleys. As a means to upgrade aging infrastructure and renew these permits, a collective group (the Manuherikia Catchment Water Strategy Group) including irrigators, farmers and local and regional council representatives are working together to determine a viable outcome.

A high level overview study was carried out to investigate the catchment's water supply and potential demand, and a prefeasibility study considered infrastructure development options for the catchment. Five options have been selected to be studied in greater detail in a full Feasibility Stage, incorporating issues identified as important by the community.

For further information on the project visit the website mcwater.co.nz.