

news 13.

North Canterbury continues to feel the impact of the drought and tough economic conditions and we will all be hoping for a more favourable spring and summer. While supporting farmers and communities with their environment management goals continues to be the focus for the Hurunui District Landcare Group, the group also offers support to groups, communities and individuals. Please do not hesitate to contact our Catchment Farm Advisors or any member of our team if we can help in any way.

HDLG'S NEW CHAIR Ian Knowles



Supporting the Hurunui community during what is a particularly challenging time will be one of Ian Knowles's top priorities as he takes on the role of Chair of the HDLG.

Ian, who farms a hill country property at Waipara, took over the position from Ben Ensor at HDLG's annual meeting in June. Ben has led the group since its inception in 2016.

Drought and uncertainty around regulations coupled with a tough economic environment has made for a very difficult year for many of HDLG's 300 members and Ian says the Group has been focused on looking after their farmers and communities

This has been reflected in the types of events and workshops HDLG has been running in recent months which have focused on mental health and wellbeing and business management.

"While we haven't moved away from our environmental work, our focus has been on what's in front of our members and helping them to keep themselves and their businesses going." *Cont. Page 2*

THANKS TO Ben Ensor



The Hurunui District Landcare Group would like to thank Ben Ensor for his exceptional leadership over the past nine years as Chair. Under his guidance, the Group has grown from a small group of sheep and beef farmers enjoying a steak at the Waikari pub while grappling with regulatory issues to one of the leading catchment groups in New Zealand, representing over 300 farms.

Ben's ability to listen and guide conversations has not only earned him personal respect but has also been crucial in building bridges and driving critical discussions with the Regional Council. His efforts in securing significant funding have made a tangible difference to farms throughout our region and made HDLG the envy of catchment groups across the country.

We are deeply grateful for Ben's dedication and vision, which have been critical to our success.

HDLG has given Ben the inaugural Lifetime Membership

HDLG's new Chair Ian Knowles cont.

HDLG has been working alongside other organisations such as the Rural Support Trust to ensure no-one is missed during what is a difficult time for many in North Canterbury.

One of the biggest challenges facing the HDLG is the change in the funding which no longer allows its staff to work one-on-one with individual members.

While HDLG is working to deliver the same good service through catchment groups, smaller groups of farmers, special interest groups and workshops, they are also looking for both short and long-term funding options.

HDLG has joined the recently formed Aotearoa New Zealand Catchment Collective (ANZCC) which will be advocating for long-term base funding for catchment groups as its priority.

HDLG's former Chair Ben Ensor was instrumental in getting ANZCC off the ground and is now on the organisation's committee.

Ben says the motivation behind the formation of ANZCC was the lack of secure, long-term Government funding available for community catchment groups.

He says over the past five years, the growth and success of community catchment groups has been exponential, primarily due to the way they work.

"They are community and grass-roots led and this is the reason why they work so well and why they've been so effective."

As well as securing long-term funding, Ensor says part of ANZCC's role will be ensuring regulators have a clear understanding of what community catchment groups are all about and how they work.

HDLG supports a number of catchment or special interest groups, and funding is available for farming or community groups with a specific focus.

Amongst the groups HDLG support are the Cheviot Irrigators Group and the Blythe Valley Community Catchment Group.



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Are you keen to get involved, or know someone who might be? You can enter online, or nominate a farmer or grower and their local Regional Coordinator will be in touch.

See www.bfea.org.nz for more information or to enter.



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group funding

Group funding for your local catchment group is available through HDLG's transition project. The funding aims to help groups of farmers with a common environmental interest access experts, technical advice or funding for catchment scale work i.e traps, plants etc. We are already supporting four of these groups with \$6000.00 a year and are looking for more. If you are a part of a group of farmers that would like funding to access technical/expert advice please contact admin@hurunuilandcaregroup.co.nz for a form.

Cheviot Irrigators Group

HDLG coordinator Josh Brown also coordinates the Cheviot Irrigators Group which is a collective of independent 32 irrigators within the Hurunui District. While a number of these farmers are near Cheviot, members include irrigated farms from Domett, Scargill and Hawarden. These include dairy, sheep and beef and some mixed-cropping farmers.

Josh says the group was formed in 2017 in response to regulatory requirements around land use consents, but it is essentially a support network for independent irrigators. It can be difficult for individuals to navigate the regulatory space and understand their obligations as irrigators and this is where the Cheviot Irrigators Group can help.

“We run training days, disseminate information and will advocate on behalf of the irrigators with Environment Canterbury.”

Around half of the members are currently working through water-take consent renewals and Josh says he can help with this process by providing guidance and advocacy.

Another project the group is working on is offering a simple, low-cost soil moisture monitoring system to complement other soil moisture monitoring systems. It helps give irrigators a good understanding of what is happening to soil moisture and allows them to make the most efficient use of their water resource. Please contact Josh on 027 774 7778 if you would like more information on the soil moisture monitoring system.

Blythe Valley Community Catchment Group

With a membership representing over 1100oha, the Blythe Valley Community Catchment Group (BCG) was only formed one year ago but has already made an impact.

Group coordinator, Richard Shaw, says there were two drivers behind the formation of BCG; the first was an article in the media referencing an incorrect report claiming that 80 percent of the Blythe River boundary had been converted to intensive agricultural production, the second was the change to HDLG's funding model away from one-on-one farmer support to a focus on catchment or special interest groups. Many of the predominately sheep and beef farmers in the Blythe Valley were HDLG members and wanted to continue to access HDLG's services and support through the formation of a group.

At one of BCG's initial meetings, members identified pest control as a topic of common interest and put together a trapping programme which began in January of this year.

Just eight months into the programme, collectively members have removed over 900 pests and predators including 182 possums, 120 cats, 170 hedgehogs and 123 deer.

For the small pests, they are predominantly using live capture traps and Richard says these have been very successful. These are cheaper and more user friendly than other traps and allow farmers to incorporate trap monitoring into their daily activities.

Richards says BCG aims to have three or four meetings a year and this has brought a relatively close-knit community even closer together.

A recent meeting incorporated a civil defence strategy so the group knows who within the catchment has generators, excavators, fire-fighting pumps and the other equipment that may be needed in a civil defence emergency.

Working with HDLG Catchment Farm Advisor Billy Bartum, BCG has managed to secure \$20,000 worth of funding to carry out an intense trapping programme on a braided section of the Blythe River that is home to at-risk and threatened nest bird species. These include Terns, Black-billed gulls, Banded Dotterels, Pied Stilts and the South Island Pied Oyster Catchers.

While it is very early days with their predator control, Richard says they are already hearing anecdotal reports of increased native bird numbers in gardens and patches of native vegetation within the catchment. The new trapping funding includes the establishment of a monitoring programme to better quantify the impacts upon bird numbers.

workshops

Economic resilience and financial sustainability loans

In response to interest from members, HDLG is holding a workshop on Economic Resilience with Brad Olsen. At the workshops the four major banks will also outline their sustainability loan options.

Outstanding speaker Chief Executive and Principal Economist at Infometrics, Brad Olsen is a leading economic commentator in New Zealand. Brad is passionate about using economics to make better

informed decisions and prides his ability to communicate complex and detailed trends in a simple, relatable, and useful manner. He will present about the current economic trends, where he sees the economy going in the next 12 months and how he thinks these might affect the agricultural sector.

Following Brad, BNZ, ANZ, ASB and Westpac will outline their sustainably-linked loan or green loan options. Access to this

sustainability linked capital will allow you to capitalise on your next environmental project on farm and/or accessing a sustainability linked loan for potential pricing benefit across all of your loan. Come along to find out more from your bank.

DETAILS ARE:

DATE 12th September

TIME 11-1pm (lunch provided)

LOCATION Omihi Hall

PLEASE RSVP TO

admin@hurunuilandcaregroup.co.nz



FIRST AID COURSE

In June, we held a St John Level 1 first aid course. This filled up very quickly and we received good feedback about the value of this course. HDLG is gauging interest in a second course. If you are interested in attending please email admin@hurunuilandcaregroup.co.nz



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