

## Introducing NCC Deputy Mayor Ali Boswijk

Cr Ali Boswijk grew up in Guernsey where water was an extremely scarce resource. The island only had one dam and there were some years when water was very close to running out.

"I remember everyone putting a house brick in their toilet cisterns - it was just common practice. There was regular public debate about what to do, with some creative suggestions - including towing icebergs to the island (I'm not sure where from)."

Ali has also lived in the Cayman Islands where there is no natural fresh water supply so water was very expensive and de-salinated - which tasted awful.



"I have an understanding of the importance of water supply, management and conservation for social and economic benefit."

Ali is Deputy Mayor for Nelson City Council and Deputy Chair of the Council's Community Services Committee and member of Economic Development Sub-committee. She has a strong interest in economic and social development and the importance of a clean, consistent water supply to quality of life and economic stability and growth.

For more information visit:

[www.tasman.govt.nz/index.php?WaterforWaimeaBasin](http://www.tasman.govt.nz/index.php?WaterforWaimeaBasin)  
or search for "Lee Dam" on Facebook to keep up to date

If you would like to receive your future WWAC newsletters via email please notify  
Committee Secretary Valerie Gribble - [valerie.gribble@tasman.govt.nz](mailto:valerie.gribble@tasman.govt.nz).

### This project is funded by:

- Tasman District Council
- Nelson City Council
- Waimea Plains water users and landowners
- Community Irrigation Fund
- Fish and Game New Zealand  
Nelson Marlborough Region

### In kind support is received from:

- Iwi
- Department of Conservation



### WWAC Members

Murray King (Chairman, Lower Confined Aquifer)	03 544 8465
Dennis Cassidy (Delta Zone)	03 544 2852
Kit Maling (Waimea East Irrigation Co)	03 544 0536
Stephen Sutton (Waimea West)	03 544 4026
David Easton (Upper Confined Aquifer)	03 526 6854
Julian Raine (Golden Hills/Hope Aquifer)	03 547 5338
Barney Thomas (Nelson iwi)	03 547 4934
Deputy Mayor Tim King (TDC)	03 542 3849
Peter Thomson (TDC)	03 543 8440
Neil Deans (Fish and Game)	03 544 6382
Mike Schruer (NCC)	03 546 0309
Martin Heine (DOC)	03 546 9335
Phil Ruffell (NCC)	03 546 0359
Deputy Mayor Ali Boswijk (NCC)	027 482 1462

WWAC members are available to answer your questions.

### Lee/Wairoa Liaison Group

Terry Trembath (Lee Valley)	03 542 3387
Allen and Maree Parsons (Wairoa)	03 541 9637
Wayne Neal (Lee Valley)	03 542 4424
Tony Chivers (Wairoa)	03 541 8810
Bill & Joan O'Neill (Lee Valley)	03 542 3707
G & L O'Meara (Lee Valley)	03 542 4004
Chris Weir (Lee Valley)	03 542 3197
John Kuipers (Wairoa Gorge Rd)	03 542 3425

### Project Manager – Joseph Thomas

Tasman District Council  
Private Bag 4, Richmond 7050  
Phone: 03 543 8494, fax 03 543 9524 or  
email: [Joseph.Thomas@tasman.govt.nz](mailto:Joseph.Thomas@tasman.govt.nz)  
[www.tasman.govt.nz/index.php?WaterforWaimeaBasin](http://www.tasman.govt.nz/index.php?WaterforWaimeaBasin)



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## Waimea Water Augmentation Committee (WWAC)

### Message from the Chairman

Yet another year has passed in WWAC's continued drive to "provide a solution to Waimea's acute water shortage". While this may appear long and protracted, I can assure you that the work continues with as much enthusiasm as it did at the outset seven years ago.

Unfortunately there is a process to follow and a large body of work not always apparent from the outside. The committee continues to meet monthly with the technical group often meeting weekly.

While the current rain is welcome we still have a long summer ahead and we already have had water rationing in December. The dry conditions we have had through October and November highlights the low reliability of supply of the Waimea Plains water resource with water augmentation being the best long term solution to overcoming the problem.

This year we farewell Dave Plant from NCC as he retired and welcome Phil Ruffell as his replacement. The other notable change is Ali Boswijk replacing Mark Holmes as NCC political representative, giving WWAC both deputy mayors of the two councils and signifying the importance of this project to the wider community.

The most significant event this period has been the community irrigation fund awarding WWAC \$995,000 toward detailed design work. It is significant and pleasing that central government, through MAF, sees such merit in our project. Also of significance has been the Land and Water Forum commending us as a good example of collaborative governance.

Some recent commentary has focused on the potential cost of the Lee Valley dam. Unfortunately this was focused on the top end of the range of preliminary indicative costs. WWAC is determined to continue to reduce the overall project cost wherever possible and until detailed design work is complete final costs will not be set.

Thanks must go to the members of the committee for their time and energy, also special thanks to our project manager Joseph Thomas for his enthusiasm and dedication.

Wishing you all a merry Christmas and productive new year.

**Murray King, Chairman**  
**Waimea Water Augmentation Committee**



Lower Waimea River and Dry Spots in the 2001 Drought



Looking out over the Wairoa Gorge – Waimea East Irrigation Intake in the foreground on the right

## Lee Dam Secures Community Irrigation Fund (CIF) Grant

In mid 2010, Government expanded the scope of the MAF administered Community Irrigation Fund to include detailed engineering design work for irrigation schemes that include good environmental standards and processes.

Funding covers the design stage up to the completion of the final design report and/or preparation of contract documents for the construction contract. The fund is able to cover 50% of the cost. The close-off date for the first funding round for detailed scheme design proposals was 10 September 2010.

The Waimea Water Augmentation Committee (WWAC) considered this was an excellent opportunity for this community to access funding towards work that is integral to the project and would otherwise have had to be paid for by the community. The committee lodged a detailed proposal and the Chairman and Project Manager with the engineering consultants attended an interview in Wellington in late September 2010 where the application was considered by an independent panel.

The WWAC application was one of several from around the country that was assessed for funding. WWAC is pleased that its application was successful and has been granted \$995,000 (incl GST) to progress this further work.

This funding was a substantial part of the funds available (i.e. about \$2 million). This work is planned over the next two years and will provide certainty as to the design and also enable far



*Celebrating the successful application to the CIF fund are (from left) Dennis Cassidy, Neil Deans, Joseph Thomas and Nick Smith.*

more detailed costings for the dam to be established.

WWAC believes this is in the community interest as the community can then make informed decisions on the dam.

The other part of the cost will continue to be funded by the existing provisions from Tasman District Council, Nelson City Council, Fish and Game and the water permit holders and rural landowner levies. WWAC is hopeful that detailed engineering investigations can start early next year.

## Lee Dam - Governance Project

Goodman Tavendale Reid (GTR) a Christchurch legal firm with experience in community irrigation project structure and governance has been working for WWAC in developing a community owned company model for the Lee Dam.

This work was one approved last year and is funded in part (50%) by the Community Irrigation Fund (CIF). Preliminary work has been completed and WWAC has recommended to Councils a community owned company structure. The proposal suggests 70% of the cost be borne by the water users and councils based on their water allocation/need and 30% be borne by the general community (via the two Councils) and central government. The proportions were evaluated based on water storage for consumptive use present and future and environmental, community and recreational flows required in the river. To safeguard the guaranteed environmental flow the environmental component share is proposed to be represented by a Community Trust. The Councils would have to run a consultation process with their respective communities with

the range of ownership and governance options available considering the WWAC proposition prior to making a decision on their participation. The Tasman District Council is proposing to do this early next year.

WWAC has also been evaluating further financing options for the dam and is waiting for more details on the hydro generation optimisation and valuation. This information is important in narrowing down the cost range for water users and the community to consider. WWAC would like to emphasise that this is a significant and complex project with many aspects to it and is endeavouring to ensure all considerations are given to cost. WWAC is committed to promote the most cost efficient, beneficial and sustainable options for the water users and community for the long term. WWAC is hoping to undertake further extensive consultation with the water users and the community including sector and interest groups next year when further details become available.

## Waimea Plains water augmentation - an independent view by Dick Bennison, Duke and Cooke property valuers

Rural properties and their valuation and management are Dick's speciality. He has considerable experience in litigation work and has appeared as an expert witness in the High Court, District Court, Environment Court and in planning hearings. Dick also has extensive expertise in the area of compensation.

He has held positions in the Nelson/Marlborough branch of the Institute of Valuers. Dick and his family live on a small rural

holding near Richmond.

The availability of water from the aquifers below the Waimea Plains has been fundamental to intensive horticultural and agricultural production on the plains since the mid 1960s. Advancing irrigation technology in the 1970s, particularly high-pressure, high-volume travelling irrigators in pastoral situations, and computerised low-pressure trickle irrigation for horticulture,

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revolutionised land use on the plains from the early 1970s. In particular, it made the production of pipfruit, berryfruit and kiwifruit on the fertile plains land practical and led to a number of orcharding families relocating onto the plains. This was at the expense of traditional mixed cereal cropping and fat lamb production. The ready availability of irrigation water from the Waimea aquifers has therefore been a fundamental driver of land values on the plains over the past 40 years and the primary influence in land use change.

Access to the water from the aquifers has always been subject to the provisions of water rights or water permits, administered by the Tasman District Council. Water rights have been issued on the basis of a water allocation model that was determined by the known resource in the water catchment and the minimum flows required in the Waimea River to maintain water quality and aquatic life. The present allocation model is based on historical knowledge of the water resource and minimum flows required in the Waimea River at Appleby to prevent salt water intrusion into the fresh water aquifers. That minimum flow level is presently set at 225 litres per sec (l/sec). It is evident from recent ecological studies undertaken by the Cawthron Institute that the present minimum flows are insufficient to maintain water quality and aquatic life in the river and the minimum flow levels should be set at 1100 l/sec. It is widely acknowledged that the water resource is currently over-allocated and access to ground water by all users is under threat. There is the potential that a minimum flow requirement could be imposed for the Waimea River, either through the Tasman Resource Management Plan processes, or through the imposition of a national environmental standard. The extent of that over-allocation is considerable and unsustainable in the long term. The current allocation model provides for 3800 ha to be irrigated based on the 225 l/sec minimum flow, whereas in the worst-case scenario water allocation may be reduced to a level that leaves sufficient water to irrigate only 705 ha.

It is clear that the traditional argument that productive agriculture is more important than aquatic life or water quality in our streams and rivers is no longer valid, and there is a growing realisation amongst the wider community, irrigators included, that those values need to be addressed. There can be no doubt that there will be increasing political pressure to have those values encapsulated in water management plans. The fact that the Waimea water resource is presently grossly over-committed is widely known, and although not accepted as such, it is presently being tolerated by environmental organisations such as Fish and Game and Forest and Bird. They are presently choosing not to challenge the validity of the current water allocation model through the Resource Management Act process awaiting the outcome of the Waimea Water Augmentation Committee (WWAC) investigations into the options for augmenting the river flows to enable irrigation to continue while maintaining the minimum flow rates required in the river.

The WWAC have been investigating options for the storage of excess winter flows to be released back into the river during the summer period, and they are now recommending a water storage dam in the Lee Valley.

The benefits of this Water Augmentation Scheme, particularly to existing water users whether they are irrigators, urban or industrial users, will be in maintaining access to a reliable source

of water at the same levels currently enjoyed. If there is no augmentation, the worst-case scenario is that current total water allocations will need to be reduced by 82% if the community's desire is to maintain the water flow in the river at levels that will maintain water quality, recreational values and aquatic life.

From an agricultural and horticultural productive perspective that would put production on the Waimea Plains back to the position that it was in the late 1960s, where the majority of the land was dry and there was minimal intensive pastoral and horticultural production. This would clearly result in a dramatic reduction in capital values (land and improvements) that would cripple most existing enterprises relying on irrigation. The economic feasibility study carried out by Northington Partners estimates the aggregate loss in capital value at \$53,800 per ha, or \$166 million over the 3095 ha that could no longer be irrigated.

The results of the studies undertaken to date clearly highlight the present predicament of continued water usage of the Waimea River water resource and, if anything, highlights how the availability of water has been significantly over valued by all water users and potential users when they have purchased land in the past. There has always been the assumption in the marketplace that while water permits are for a finite term, usually 15 years, that they would be renewed as matter of course, provided usage had been in accordance with permit conditions. The Tasman District Council have adopted a use-it-or-lose-it approach to the management of water permits, and have generally only not renewed permits where there has been no evidence of consistent use. Until recently there has not been any anticipation in the market that water permits would not be renewed and consequently the risk of not having access to water has not been factored into land values by the market.

The studies also make it clear that existing water users will need to make some further investment in order to maintain the level of access to water that they currently enjoy. While this may seem unpalatable to some, there seems to be very little alternative. It is clear that political pressure will mount for changes in the minimum flow rates in the Waimea River that will inevitably result in less water being available for consumptive uses, increasing the risk of drought affecting production and ultimately a substantial reduction in the viability of horticultural and intensive pastoral production. One of the additional benefits of the proposed scheme is that the non-consumptive uses will bear 30% of the capital and ongoing operational costs of the scheme.

It is clear that access to reliable water from the Waimea River and its aquifers will continue to be a significant driver of land values into the future and that access to that water is presently at a crossroads. If the community as a whole, and consumptive water users in particular, do choose to support water augmentation this will be a positive driver over an extended period of time. The alternative is that agricultural and horticultural production will diminish along with capital values and other alternate, more expensive options will be required to meet the growing need to meet urban and industrial uses.

**Dick Bennison**

*Company Director, Dip. Agr. B.Ag. Com. MNZIPIM ANZIV SPINZ*