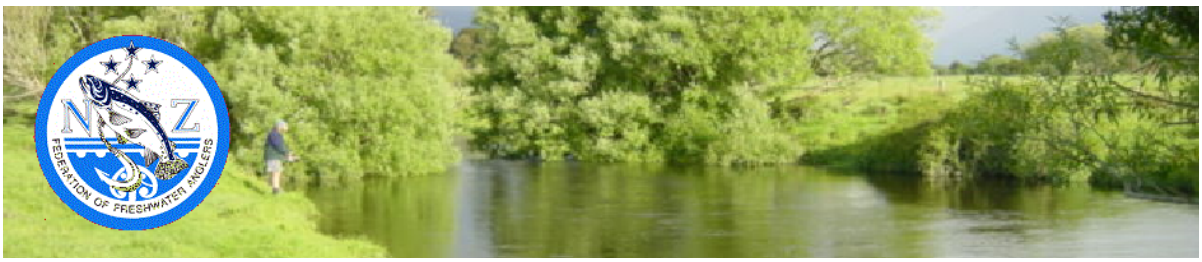

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DOC and Fish and Game NZ - Conspicuous by their Absence at Crisis Time

Opinion by Andi Cockroft,

Chairman Council of Outdoor Recreation Assns of NZ (CORANZ)

Originally published at https://coranz.org.nz/doc-and-fish-and-game-nz-conspicuous-by-their-absence-at-crisis-time/

I do not currently hold a trout fishing licence but as a keen conservationist and outdoor recreationalist, I take a keen and strong interest in the environment and in particular water, rivers and streams.

I have watched the energetic admirable efforts of the NZ Federation of Freshwater Anglers and in particular the research work of its chairman Dr Peter Trolove that has revealed alarming nitrate levels in water, both underground aquifer and rivers and streams in Canterbury and South Canterbury.

Research by the New Zealand Federation of Freshwater Anglers (NZFFA) has revealed unacceptably high levels of nitrate pollution in rivers and streams across Canterbury.

NZFFA president Dr Peter Trolove said the massive increase in the amount of irrigated farmland across Canterbury in recent decades has resulted in a comparable reduction in the region's water quantity and quality from over-allocation of water and nitrate pollution mostly from corporate dairy farming.

The stimulus for investigation was in declining salmon and trout populations.

"The region's recreational fisheries at large braided river mouths and in smaller lowland spring fed streams and rivers have seen trout numbers decline to near extinction," said Peter Trolove.

The loss of native and recreational fish from Canterbury's river mouth lagoons appeared related to lower residual flows and the loss of variable flows due to excessive water abstraction for irrigation. But it's not just aquatic life under threat. A Danish study of 2.7 million people pointed to a direct link between bowel cancer and high nitrate levels in drinking water. Alarmingly Canterbury and South Canterbury have the highest bowel cancer levels in New Zealand and listen for it, in the world.

The Labour government promised in 2017 and 2019 to urgently address the worsening state of rivers and streams. Some 80 percent of people in polls of public concerns rated the state of rivers as a big issue. National don't escape critical scrutiny either. In 2010 the John Key-led National government sacked the democratically elected ECan 14 member council and replaced it with state commissioners. Critics of the government's "communistic state control" said the move's objective seemed to facilitate further, both extensive and intensive dairying, particularly by corporate ventures.

The NZ Federation of Freshwater Anglers is a totally voluntary organisation comprising individuals from the trout and salmon fishing public. The Department of Conservation entrusted by statute to safeguard native fish populations, seabird life and the environment has been completely silent. So for that matter has another statutory organisation Fish and Game NZ and indeed regional Fish and Game regions.

Ironically Fish and Game is under review, administered by ironically again, the Department of Conservation.

Where are DOC and Fish and Game NZ?

By law they are meant to be strong guardians of rivers, streams and fish populations and associated wildlife valleys.

An alarming aspect is that the Federation of Freshwater Anglers stands alone except for later involvement by Greenpeace.

It's not that the issue of declining freshwater ecosystems and fish life is anything new.

Twenty two years ago, Wayne McCallum, North Canterbury Fish and Game's Environment Officer, wrote in the November 2000 issue of the magazine "Southern Fishing and Boating" about lowland trout rivers and said that "on careful study, there appears to be more than a problem. Rather the evidence points to a wholesale crisis."

He said "the crisis is demonstrated most graphically to anglers in the decline of trout densities across a mounting list of New Zealand's lowland waterways."

Wayne McCallum cited two examples, Canterbury's Selwyn River and the Horokiwi Stream, north of Wellington, a stream that was the subject of scientist Radway Allen's classic study of a "typical New Zealand trout stream." Both had undergone severe declines in trout numbers with trout becoming "non-existent". Yet in the Horokiwi from Radway Allen's observation in the year 1950, there were "70 fish per cubic 100 metres."

"The examples of the Selwyn and Horokiwi cannot be regarded as exceptions. Rather they appear to be just two instances of a growing list of degraded lowland waterways in New Zealand," continued Wayne McCallum.

Wayne McCallum's expert views received little or no comment. The impression was that Fish and Game and North Canterbury in particular, did not want to know about it.

There was silence tantamount to a "a state of denial"

Wayne McCallum obviously felt the same.

He wrote "perhaps the biggest factor in causing frustration is the failure to acknowledge the existence of a crisis at all."

DOC and Fish and Game need to realise they are fundamentally public service organisations. They have a strong duty to the public who respectively pay the bills by way of taxes and sport fishing licences.

To be silent, mute, inertia personified is a dereliction of responsibility and duty.

New Gear, New skills, New fun.

Guest article by Dr Charles Baycroft

Some people, bless their souls, seem to be content to catch lots of trout with one well used and loved setup.
A rod, line, leader, some tippet and a few little brown things that sink or float are all these sensible people require.
For some of us that's not enough.

With so many rods in different lengths, weights, speed, colors and construction why have only one.
Each one, of course, needs a specific reel reel or two with perhaps extra spools for some of the huge variety of fly lines available.
Leaders of various lengths, tapers, strengths and materials and spools of different tippet materials must be available to meet the conditions of the day.
Once rigged up with the right tools for the job we need to tie something attractive on to tempt the wily trout.
Just because trout mostly eat little brown things that mostly look alike is no reason not to have as many variations, sizes, patterns and types of flies neatly stored in the many boxes that we seldom use.
In recent years, I have noticed that there are not as many of the little brown things that trout eat in the rivers and not as many of the flying bugs they turn into either.

The hatches I expected have not occurred as often or in the same numbers as the past.
There are not so many little brown wiggly things under the rocks I turn over in the rivers.
I thought it just might be me acting like old people do and lamenting the passing of the good old days so I called NZ freshwater scientist and expert Mike Joy.
"Mike", I asked "Is it just me or are there less bugs around these days?" His expert reply was that the numbers of Mayflies and other aquatic insects are rapidly declining in NZ and all over the world because the freshwater ecosystems are polluted with too many nitrates and other toxic chemicals.
I checked with Google and yes, the aquatic insects are disappearing.
But trout survive and grow by eating these bugs (nymphs, emergers, spinners) and we catch the trout by casting imitations to them.
How does that affect my fishing and, more importantly, is it an excuse to buy more gear.
The increasing pollution of the freshwater ecosystems, demise of the aquatic insects and scarcity of the food that trout eat is bad news that I can't do anything about because the important people in business and politics have decided that it is good for the economy and can't.

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Green dream

pushes farmers into red

From Newsroom:

A multi-award-winning Southland couple share their harrowing experience of regenerative land practices as a warning of what can go wrong down on a green farm

Linzi and Jeff Keen were fencing off waterways and planting natives well before it was fashionable.

In what is a fairly traditional farming landscape near Lumsden in Northern Southland, the innovative couple continue to be the greenies of the hood.

Rolling hills lead the way to their 870ha Tomogalak Gorge farm, which backs onto the tussock country of the Mataura Range.

The property has been in Jeff's family for 43 years. He

took it over in the early 2000s with Linzi later joining him. Both educated at Lincoln University(then College), they consider “good biology” a key to farm practice.

It was a desire to create the ultimate “green” farming system for whoever comes next that partly led them to regenerative practices.

The promises of premium prices for the resulting produce from discerning overseas buyers was another carrot.

The system aims to build soil health, increase plant and animal nutritive quality, reduce stock stress and lessen the need for chemicals.

Linzi, a self-confessed “hippie-type” who grew up on a lifestyle block, says the couple were readily caught up in the ideology.

Fertiliser use and stocking rates were already fairly low and no drenching of adult stock had been done for 15 years. That and the ongoing native planting contributed to the farm receiving a Ballance Farm Environment Award in 2005.

“At that time we were probably considered greenies and alternative farmers,” Jeff says.

In 2019, when the couple won an Environment Southland community award for environmental leadership in farming and land management, they had just begun shifting to the regenerative system.

Jeff had joined a local “red meat profit partnership” group that aimed to show how to apply the practice to livestock farming, with the government putting in money to get

speakers in.

“I’ve never really wanted to farm intensively. We’d looked at what fine particle lime could do for worm populations and had strong interest and background in soil biology. We’d got things going pretty well at that time,” he says.

Stock health was good with a consistent pregnancy rate in their breeding ewes of about 170% and lambing percentage of 135% without doing a lambing beat.

Typically a third of the lambs were heavy enough to sell at weaning.

“The regen thing seemed like the holy grail. We could do it on our own with lower inputs,” Jeff says.

The concept, Linzi says, was sold to them with a fair bit of marketing spin but they wanted nothing more than for it to work.

“It was being sold as a panacea for low emissions and the way to save the planet - the be-all and end-all of great sustainable farming.”

With the expert advice and plenty of research on board, paddocks were reduced in size, test plots put in and mixed-species seed sown, including sunflowers, linseed, radish, rye corn, buckwheat and plantain. In what proved to be something of a honeymoon period, the plantings thrived and visitors came to field days to admire the scene.

Linzi recalled being out among the sunflowers, bugs and bees excited by what seemed a dream result.

The couple put another trophy on the shelf in 2020 - a Landcare Trust Award for Innovation in Sustainable Farm Forestry, and things were looking good.

Nothing in the bank

Read the full article at: https://www.newsroom.co.nz/green-dream-pushes-farmers-into-red

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Fishing app will record much-needed data

By **Fiona Ellis**
from ODT https://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/fishing-app-will-record-much-needed-data

Tautuku Fishing Club's Mike Todd (left), Brett Bensemann and Ian Gunion (right) show National's Todd Muller (centre right) the Mainland Catch app, which helps local fishermen navigate fishing boundaries and catch limits. PHOTO: GREGOR RICHARDSON

The traditional fishing kit may not include a cellphone, but a newly-launched app

could be set to change that.

Mainland Catch aims not only to help anglers keep within catch limits, but to use "citizen science" to gather much-needed data on New Zealand fisheries.

The app's official launch took place at Dunedin's Tautuku Fishing Club on Friday.

It is the result of a collaboration between Fish Mainland, Fisheries New Zealand, and Plink Software, with funding from the Ministry for Primary Industries Sustainable Food & Fibre Futures and the Myers Foundation Trust.

Fish Mainland director and Tautuku Fishing Club president Brett Bensemann said the app would help recreational fishers navigate the National Blue Cod Strategy's traffic light system.

Blue cod catch limits are set at different numbers around the coast nationwide, depending on what colour an area has been designated.

Dunedin sits on the cusp of two categories.

While Otago Harbour is in the orange zone with a daily limit of 10 fish per person, those heading south from Taiaroa Head cross into the green zone, where the limit is 15.

"Where you've fished in a green area, and you've recorded your fish in a green area, on the app it will show its been caught in a green area," Mr Bensemann said.

When anglers then brought their catch through an orange area, they would then have proof they had complied with regulations.

People could also record fish they had caught and released, he said.

However, be believed the most significant aspect of the app was the potential for recreational fishers to establish a record base that had been lacking until now.

The information that could now be recorded would be helpful in determining the need for marine reserves or closure areas, he said.

"It's voluntary, but if you start using the app you start seeing the need for data — there is certainly need for recreational data."

It was also a safety device, he said.

If someone failed to return from a fishing trip as expected, the app would show when and where they had used the app.

It was easy to use and roadshows would also be held to introduce people to the

app, he said.

The app was set to be expanded to help improve other areas, such as, paua management in Kaikoura.

"There are huge possibilities in the future."

Predators Are Not Evil But are Invariability Part of Healthy Ecosystems

Opinion by Tony Orman

New Zealand has for many decades waged a war against predators. Currently there are a number of anti-predator campaigns, often using public money in big spend-ups on futile aerial poisoning exercises. In addition, in the end, the blanket operations run counter to the impassioned aim of exterminating predators (e.g. rats) and instead cause major disruption to food chains and serious damage to the ecosystem.

Invariably anti-predator campaigns have as foundation, an "anti-introduced species phobia" which ideologically decree that anything introduced such as trout and even salmon, are invasive pests. Trout are often labelled as invasive pests by agencies as Forest and Bird and the Department of Conservation while farming spokesman seek a scapegoat for water contamination or excessive abstraction for irrigation.

Nature knows best. Trout were introduced and after an initial upsurge, populations stabilised to fit the "carrying capacity" of the habitat and merged into ecological niches and relationships with other species. "Introduced" trout may prey on whitebait but then native shags and native eels prey on juvenile trout. Aren't humans an introduced species by way of a Polynesian migration

about the 13th century and European migration starting in the 19th century?

Currently the obsessive hatred about predators is seen in campaigns such as Predator Free 2050 and Zero Invasive Predators, the latter jazzily known by the acronym of ZIP. The zealous programmes have earned international recognition such as when "Time" magazine proclaimed "Rats, Possums and Stoats Beware! New Zealand Goes to War Against Invasive Pests."

But the programmes are like the 1837 Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale "The Emperor's New Clothes". At one stage in the fable, the wise man serving the Emperor thinks "What!" "Is it possible that I am a fool? I have never thought so myself. No one must know it now if I am so. Can it be, that I am unfit for my job?"

Those questions should be asked of those who champion Predator Free 2050 and ZIP - people from Prime Ministers to central and local government politicians, local bodies, naive unquestioning media whoop as investigative journalists, extreme green groups and even unprincipled "scientists" following the money trail of funding, all pursue the dream of exterminating New Zealand's predators.

However the reality is the dreams are running against the way Nature behaves.

Predator Role

Wildlife mangers overseas are increasingly regarding predators as an important part of a healthy ecosystem. In 2014 Al S Glen of New Zealand's Landcare Research and Christopher Dickman of Sydney University co-authored a book on "Carnivores of Australia" and in a chapter "The Importance

of Predators" said "to maintain or restore functioning ecosystems, wildlife managers must consider the ecological importance of predators."

Predators tend to remove vulnerable prey, such as the old, injured, sick, or very young, leaving more food for the survival and success of healthy prey species. Also, by controlling the size of prey populations, predators help slow down the spread of disease. Predators will catch healthy prey when they can, but catching sick or injured or unwary prey is far more likely and helps in the formation of healthier prey populations because only the fittest animals survive and are able to reproduce.

In addition, predators help to reduce the negative impacts that their prey may have on the ecosystem if they become too abundant or it they stayed in one area for too long. Anglers broadly speaking, are a predator of trout and salmon.

Caroline Fraser writing for the US Yale School of the Environment said experts "beginning with aquatic experiments, have amassed considerable evidence of damage done to food chains by predator removal and have extended such studies to land."

Predators are simply mostly a part of any ecosystem's food chain functioning. New Zealand's native falcon prey on other native birds such as tuis and bellbirds. Blue duck (whio) prey almost entirely on aquatic invertebrates, mostly caddisfly larvae. Kiwi prey on worms.

When animals of a predatory nature are introduced such as rats and stoats were to New Zealand, they go through a "boom and bust" phase before their populations settle down to a relatively static state. Unfortunately, sometimes prey species can become drastically reduced or even extinct as a result of the predator "boom". The critical aspect of

managing this situation is avoiding predator “booms”. Consequently,the fervour and haste which the Department of Conservation and local councils applies with toxins is mismanagement, reckless and fraught with ecological danger.

Disastrous Outcomes

Large scale poisoning with eco-toxins such as 1080 and brodifacoum may heavily reduce predator numbers initially but with a few short years, the outcome is disastrous. The science is there to show the resurgence in predator numbers and subsequent wrecking of the food chain.

Wendy Ruscoe in a study published in Landcare Research's publication 2008 showed aerial dropping of 1080 will temporarily knock back a rat population but due to the rodent's amazing reproductive capacity, the surviving rats recover rapidly and within three years, are likely to be two to three times greater than before poisoning began.

A 2007 study by Landcare scientists Graham Nugent and Peter Sweetapple showed rat numbers recovered pre-poison levels within 18 months and at the two to three year mark, rat abundance could be four times greater than before poisoning.

Ecological Damage

That is not counting the birds and insects and other invertebrate organisms killed by 1080 as research demonstrated, by DSIR scientist Mike Meads, in the 1980’s. 1080 was originally patented as an insecticide in 1927.

Examples are many of human interference directly or indirectly into Nature’s food chains resulting in profound consequences. In a classic 1966 experiment, biologist Robert Paine removed the purple seastar, *Pisaster ochraceus* — a voracious mussel-feeder — from an area of coastline in Washington state. The predator gone, mussels exploded in numbers, crowding out biodiverse kelp communities with monoculture.

Less than a decade after *Pisaster*, marine ecologists James Estes and John Palmisano reached the astonishing and widely reported conclusion that hunting of sea otters had caused the collapse of kelp forests around the Aleutian Islands. With otters reduced to low levels, the prey (sea urchins) stripped the kelp forests.

Playing God

The concept of being ”predator free” or “zero predators” has no ecological justification, except in limited circumstances on smaller offshore islands and “mainland islands” . Even in islands where predators may have been eliminated e.g. Secretary Island in Fiordland, the success is short-lived and temporary as animals can and do swim from the mainland to recolonise.

It seem incomprehensible that an agency such as the Department of Conservation and the concepts of Predator Free 2050 and ZIP should go unquestioned in the light of the understanding internationally of the dangers of playing God with predators..

But the ‘fly in the ointment’ is human nature. For example a scientist in DOC working on predator work, arguably has a vested interest by way of employment and a handsome salary. Similarly with any consultant scientist attached to Predator Free 2050 and ZIP.

For others of zealous ideological nature, as some humans are wont to be, it becomes the pursuit of “The Impossible Dream.”

For politicians it’s good P.R. to declare war on the baddies, no matter how pointless and damaging that might be.

The sad outcomes are the gross misuse of public funds and more tragically the profound ecological damage that often occurs in the pursuit of that "Impossible Dream."

Footnote: Tony Orman has spent a lifetime in the outdoors observing and reading about it and Nature. He has had some two dozen books published, mainly on fishing, deerstalking, conservation and rural life.

Anglers are a predator of trout

Kahawai - Great Light Tackle Sport

by Tony Orman

Kahawai - what a great sporting fish and properly cared for on catching and in bringing it to the table, it's very good dining.

First catch your fish.

On lighter spinning tackle or fly fishing, at a river mouth, there's no finer sport. Contrary to popular opinion kahawai are not always a push-over to catch. There are a few basic points that I follow. But bear in mind on some days there's always exceptions to rules.

Tide

I only fish the out-going tide usually after an hour after high tide. The reason is the incoming tide is awkward to fish and the odd inevitable "rogue" wave can leave you wet and buffeted. Besides the incoming tide is awkward to fish from the angling angle. Generally kahawai after ascending the river on the rising tide then on full tide or soon after, drift back through the entrance to the sea but often hold in the outflow often a neck, just up from the sea and ambush baitfish that are either there or moving out to saltwater.

But this week just gone, I've found good fly rod sport close to a low tide. It emphasises there's no hard and fast rules.

I tie up my own saltwater flies. They're fun to tie. I tend to favour Clouser minnows with the dumb-bell eyes near the head. But just a simple streamer with white bucktail on a small hook (1/0) can be good particularly in whitebait season. Usually size 2/0 is about right in size but I like a couple of smaller sizes too.

I use a floating line fly fishing and a two and a half metre nylon trace of about 12 lbs breaking strain.

Read the Water

My observation is a number of kahawai anglers do not 'read' always the water and I see spin anglers fishing shallow water that in all probability holds nothing. Kahawai prefer clear water to see their prey and channels and gutters are ideal for them. Dirty swirling water with tidal eddies stirring up sediment is useless to fish. Yet at times I see anglers fishing there.

I try to work out where the deep gutter is.

Match the Hatch

It's a trout fishing term relative to fly fishing but the concept applies to kahawai. At times they will home in on one type of bait fish and selectively feed. The prey can be small bait fish and in that case logically a small spinner or a small sparse fly will be the best choice.

Two experiences graphically illustrate this. One was in October at the Marakopa River mouth west of Waitomo. Colin Jones and I used lighter spinning gear and very small spinners because whitebait runs were happening and we reasoned that the smaller lures were logical to the size of whitebait.

We caught a dozen or so good big sized kahawai each while over 20 other spin anglers caught one between them, because they were - illogically - all using big heavy spinners.

The other case was one evening a the Diversion where I used fly gear and a very small size 6 saltwater fly. A friend was with me with spinning gear.

Four spin anglers fishing within metres of me caught one fish, while I caught over 20, kept 8 and returned the rest. The kahawai I gutted had small bait fish in their stomachs.

Yet frequently the fly will out-fish the spinner

Vary Tactics

Variety is the spice of success! It's a sporting adage to change tactics when you're losing whether it be rugby, tennis, cricket or whatever.

The basic adage also applies to fishing and can do so with kahawai. I could cite examples when I changed my retrieve when I wasn't have having success with the normal retrieve whether spinner or fly. I recall two summers ago one day when I was "bombing out". I wear polaroids and had seen the odd kahawai just languidly follow the lure like a trout might. So I slowed right down and went slow and deep.

Last summer I found kahawai in a gutter had against the edge just following behind the retrieved fly. I only had cast three metres to swing the fly through the gutter so I slowed the retrieve right down and virtually hovered the fly in front of the fish.

That afternoon, I took three fish from that little gutter.

Be keen to explore possibilities, if fishing is slow. Sometimes at river mouths the actual outflow has not fished well so I've gone to the side 50 or 100 metres along the beach and found sport.

If you're not scoring, try something new.

Sometimes lure choice can be a factor. Vary your type of lure away from the traditional silver ticer. Try a soft bait. They have lifelike action far better than the silver ticers.

Change of Light

Change of Light is so important. All saltwater fish feed better at dawn and particularly dusk. If you can get a half falling tide to coincide with evening and early morning, that's bang on!

Sad management

Kahawai are sadly a prime example of fisheries mismanagement. The tragedy is that successive governments have been and are, oblivious to the sporting value-and the tourist angle-and the potential economic value of the fish.

Kahawai surface workups are rarely seen now. Twenty years ago they were common. Corporate pure seiners are to blame as is an inept Ministry.

Those surface workups are important in the food chain to sea birds and other fish species feasting on scraps below.

Saltwater fly fishing is **big** sport in the US and other countries. Anglers travel the world to chase bonefish but the kahawai is a terrific sports fish. Ministry "management" seem utterly ignorant of the economic value of the kahawai as a sports fish and money earner for the country. Instead corporate purse seiners plunder kahawai shoals and they are exported to Australia to be canned and even as crayfish bait.

Americans I've shown the kahawai to, are amazed. What's more they "catch and release". That kahawai is recycled. It's earned a few thousand dollars for the region and country because that tourist has often spent on accommodation, charter boat and other items.

The kahawai should be earning the $1,000 a fish for New Zealand instead of just $1 or so to be killed and sent to Australia for processing. Besides because it's often

"catch and release", the kahawai is recycled capable of earning another few thousand dollars.

© Fly rod sport on a kahawai

© A kahawai fly, floating line on the reel, ready for action.

Postings From the Website

Some of our more recent posts from the website (see https://nzffa.com)

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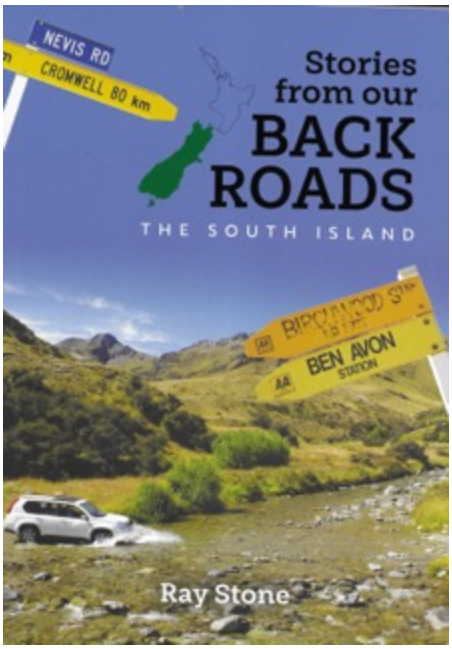

Stories from Our Back Roads

Book Review: "Stories from Our Back Roads" by Ray Stone. Two volumes at $49.99 each, i.e. North Island and South Island. Reviewed by Tony Orman Here's a twin set of…

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Dirty Truth About the Waikato River

From Radio NZ Radio NZ journalist Farah Hancock has lifted the lid on the reality of the Waikato River which from its pristine water outlet from Taupo, spilling over the…

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Peter Trolove Responds to Big Irrigators

Originally intended to be a comment attached to David Williams story here about noncompliance with the Rakaia NWCO, NZFFA Chairman Peter Trolove's thoughts elevated to a full post. Thank goodness…

Read more...

Big irrigator's water takes 'potentially non-compliant'

Original posted at https://www.newsroom.co.nz/big-irrigators-water-takes-potentially-non-compliant Regional council ECan outlines the difficulty of monitoring Rakaia River consents, and how little it knows. David Williams reports Fresh analysis of irrigation takes from Canterbury's…

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If you have not already done so feel free to comment on any of the articles on our website. The discussions always open up many valid points.

Please feel free to circulate this newsletter around club members and friends.