

MEDIA RELEASE FROM UPPER CLUTHA LAKES TRUST BOARD

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Research projects to address urgent urban stormwater management needs

Upper Clutha Lakes Trust hosted an urban stormwater management workshop in Wanaka on Monday. The workshop brought together a passionate group of 30 people to better understand existing and planned stormwater management, identify knowledge and management gaps and determine how to prioritise future work to address those gaps.

Invited speakers, Associate Professor Chris Walsh (University of Melbourne) and Jonathan Moores (NIWA) updated attendees on the latest advances and approaches on managing urban runoff. A key point from the presentation by Chris Walsh was that sensitive urban design can allow the runoff from average rain events to infiltrate into the ground, significantly reducing impacts and restoring natural flow to rivers and streams. He encouraged the group to understand that many so called drains are in fact actually streams that have been condemned to pipes, when stream sensitive planning could result in less run-off and less stormwater contamination.

Practical ways for homeowners and builders to reduce run-off include:

- Diverting roof runoff into a small tank or vegetated area. Tank water can be used to water gardens and lawns or be plumbed to toilets.
- Not over-watering lawns and reserves so the soil can soak up small amounts of rainfall.

Megan Williams, project manager for the Wanaka Water Project said that “the day was very successful, with participants hearing about past and current issues as well as identifying solutions for the future. By bringing together a mix of academic, science and community stakeholders we were able to discuss practical solutions suited to our environment.”

The Workshop highlighted the considerable scale of the urban development currently underway and planned for the Wanaka area. Attendees spent the morning looking at sites of interest, including sites where the community has already been active in measuring and improving the quality of water flowing into Lake Wanaka. A best practice case of stormwater management was seen at Kirimoko, where stormwater is actively managed on site. Kirimoko’s system involves water flowing directly to ground through grassland, native plants and natural drains, which means less run-off goes through the town’s stormwater system and into the lake.

Calum MacLeod, Deputy Mayor was “excited by the prospect of getting a stronger inter-agency cooperative group together. The closer we can work together in this space the

better.” ORC Senior Policy Analyst Sylvie Leduc commented that “The workshop was productive, and laid good foundations for the Trust, the University, QLDC and ORC to work together to understand better the challenges the catchment is facing, and to identify realistic and effective solutions to those challenges. This is an exciting step towards a truly integrated approach to manage the exceptional environment of the Upper Clutha region.”

The workshop identified key knowledge gaps and research needs, with two being prioritised.

1. Existing and new urban developments around Wanaka present an opportunity to improve understanding on how different urban design philosophies can mitigate impacts on local waterbodies, through both the construction and residential phases.
2. All participants agreed on the urgent need to improve our understanding and management of the impacts of urban runoff on the Lake Wanaka ecosystem.

The Upper Clutha Lakes Trust will work with the local community, councils and researchers from Catchments Otago / University of Otago to develop these research projects as part of the Wanaka Water Project, funded by the Freshwater Improvement Fund.

More information on the Trust and the Wanaka Water Project can be found on the Upper Clutha Lakes Trust website www.uppercluthalakestrust.org.

ENDS

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