

WATER HARVESTING AND STORAGE

April 2014

Policy

Water New Zealand supports the further development of water harvesting and storage strategies and infrastructure, which provide economic, environmental and recreational benefits.

Such infrastructure is capital intensive. Further development should be subject to central policy direction, and the exploration of all possible funding underwriting options.

Explanation

New Zealand is a water-rich nation. The country's freshwater resource also provides New Zealand with key competitive economic advantage. By international standards rates of abstraction are minimal. Despite this, the resource is facing significant challenge.

Rapid land use intensification has led to deteriorating water quality and increased competition for water in some areas. This is compromising our ability to manage the resource in a sustainable manner.

Water harvesting and storage strategies and infrastructure can contribute both to improved management and development of the resource.

Further development of water storage infrastructure would provide significant benefit to a range of stakeholder interests, covering irrigation, angling, the environment, community development, Iwi, recreation and conservation.

The weight of scientific evidence also points to climate change affecting New Zealand, with western parts of the country becoming wetter, and eastern parts becoming drier, along with more frequent and severe weather events.

This will adversely affect dryland farming practices in water-stressed regions such as Hawkes Bay and Canterbury, which would benefit from the development of water storage options.

Water storage infrastructure is capital intensive, requires long lead times for planning, and is subject to locally provided consenting processes.

Central government policy direction since the 1980's has deemed that the private benefits associated with irrigation require market driven solutions. Under this policy, there have been very few examples of successful development of water storage infrastructure.

Neither private capital alone, nor current consenting mechanisms, are likely to lead to further development of this infrastructure. For these reasons, the development of water harvesting and storage strategies and infrastructure should be included within central government planning processes.