



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

Status Report

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Climate Change Issues

Week beginning 28 September 2009



Seen by Hon Dr Nick Smith

Date _____

1. Actions from the meeting of 21 September 2009

- 1.4 ECan and Far North – A letter from Bob Parker and Canterbury Mayors has now been received. We now await your direction as to timing for announcing investigations. **In progress.**

Kevin Currie

5. Major Media Items from the past week

- 5.6 Environment Canterbury (ECan) has drawn a lot of recent media attention. The Timaru Herald has written several articles that are critical of ECan's decisions and performance. This includes criticism relating to the introduction of an annual \$63 fee for monitoring water on residents' land, ECan's threat to restrict the use of fertiliser (ECan's Natural Resources Regional Plan includes a proposal to make the use of agrichemicals a non-complying activity between the Upper and Lower Waitaki) and ECan's poor processing compliance rates for the 12 months ending June 2008. The Press also published an article (22 September) stating that ECan has come under fire from farm companies wanting to irrigate the Mackenzie Basin. They accuse ECan of costing them over \$1 million. Mackenzie Water Research Ltd, which represents all but three of the applicant companies, began a ten-week hearing in Christchurch on Monday 21 September with an attack on the regional council. The Otago Daily Times (23 September) quotes Waitaki District's deputy mayor criticising ECan's 'ineptitude' in taking years to process Waitaki consents. ECan has since passed a vote of no confidence in Chair Sir Kerry Burke and replaced him with Alec Neill.

In related news, the Ashburton Guardian (23 September) reported that Minister Hide had ordered his officials to look into ECan and whether an inquiry is warranted. This follows an approach to him from Canterbury's mayors. The story quotes Sir Burke as criticising the secrecy of the mayors' move. Timaru's mayor is reported as saying that ECan is driving away businesses.