

Freshwater - Fresh Thinking

Enhancing impact assessment in water management



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Social assessment for catchment planning

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Water management – a social issue



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- Widely accepted amongst IA practitioners as the preferred approach for applying IA to policies and plans
- Social assessment as part of SEA can assist by developing more socially sensitive policy and plans
- Applications of strategic assessment can be at a spatial level, as with a catchment, or at a sector level, as with water management
- With water, the catchment makes considerable sense as both a spatial and systemic integrating framework for assessment practice
- But application of social can be more explicit and better integrated in SEA

Integrated Assessment

- In the course of work on five catchments in Canterbury we have identified typical challenges for integrating social assessment into the planning process
- An integrated process of impact assessment supports the collaborative approach to setting limits on abstraction and water quality
- Social assessment has informed the process throughout, working alongside other technical assessments



Integrated Assessment

- Social assessment work for each catchment has included:
 - Description of the social baseline
 - Assessment of a number of land-use scenarios used to stimulate community debate and identify issues and solutions
 - Assessment of a draft package of policy and planning rules

Some IA Practice Issues

- Technical indicators – an integrating tool
- Availability and timeframes of baseline data
- Comparative case data for applying to scenarios
- The importance of local knowledge
- Timing and overall management of the planning and assessment programme

Technical Indicators

- A framework of catchment outcomes and technical indicators agreed between the zone committees and the technical team
- Provide an important tool for integrating social analysis into the assessment, eg water quality/contact recreation
- The best indicators are those that provide a means for scientific communication, eg “trout habitat” cf “ecological health”
- Indicators provide points for comparison, debate, testing of data sets, collaborative discussions

Examples of Technical Indicators

- Outcome – Thriving community
 - employment on and off farm (FTE's)
 - population (census data)
 - school rolls (Min of Ed.)
 - health services
- Not all indicators are, or need to be, measurable, eg “community cohesion” or “amenity values”



Baseline Data

- Availability of official statistics - national census was postponed to 2013, meaning restrictions on our ability to explore local changes since the 2006 census
- As a solution, the team employed proxies, accessing data such as annual school rolls and housing statistics
- Otherwise, key informant interviews, workshops and sources such as media reports were used to capture experiences of local social change, eg. arrival of migrant workers in the dairy sector since 2006



Filipino Workers in Dairy Sector

Dairy farms turn to migrant workers



www.stuff.co.nz

Last week One News, reporting Immigration NZ, noted there are 2,262 migrant dairy workers (1,124 Filipino).

Comparative Case Data

- As with project assessment, strategic social assessment uses comparative case data – in these catchments the data is applied to assessing scenarios
- Community members find the comparison cases to be particularly helpful
- There is a strong resource of social research on land-use intensification to draw on, describing effects of intensification on people and communities
- In particular, the impacts of conversion of sheep and beef farms to dairy production – brings changes in farm ownership, work, population and community life

Local Knowledge

- An important data gap was around local recreational use
- National and regional level recreation surveys such as the National Angler Survey were of limited use
- Much research is about the major rivers
- Local knowledge, gained through interviews and discussions at community workshops was vital in learning about changes in use of local streams over time as water quantity and quality have deteriorated



Process Management

- To assess social consequences of bio-physical effects, the social assessment team relies on other assessments, eg:
 - Ecological changes in streams and water bodies have effects on recreation activity
 - A change in nitrates in ground water will affect ability to meet drinking water standards (with consequences for human health)
- To integrate social assessment fully into an integrated IA process it is important to recognise interdependence of inputs from different technical areas
- These linkages can create stresses in a time-bound, participative process (eg to provide timely information for a planned community workshop)

Conclusions

- Social assessment should be an integral part of catchment planning and assessment
- Integrated, strategic IA can contribute to collaborative planning processes for water management policy and planning design
- The Canterbury experience demonstrates the importance of people skilled at working in the interface between science and communities
- Skills needed include the ability to lead, communicate and integrate technical matters, conceptualise bio-physical changes to their social consequences, and listen to various points of view, valuing local input

Harts Creek – Selwyn/Waihora

