

SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR STRATEGIC AND PROJECT DECISIONS ABOUT IRRIGATION

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SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (SIA)

SIA helps to identify predict, monitor, mitigate and manage impacts on the social environment arising from new projects, policies and plans.

The process of SIA uses:

- Public involvement and consultation
- Data gathering and analysis
- Projections of social futures
- Mitigation and management of impacts and social change
- Community development – collective actions by community members to solve problems

HOW DOES SIA IMPROVE DECISION MAKING?

- It helps to define and describe community objectives
- It helps to balance information on social, cultural, economic and bio-physical effects
- It helps to understand and interpret chains of effects

OUR WORK

We have been involved in a series of strategic assessments for land and water plans for ECAN and GWC which compiled information on social effects of irrigation.

In 2020, we reviewed these strategic plans for MFE to assist them undertake a regulatory assessment of the proposed national policy statement on freshwater management:

We have also conducted:

- An ex-post analysis of the Amuri Irrigation project
- Assessments of irrigation proposals in Canterbury (including Central Plains Irrigation)
- An analysis of initiatives for regeneration in the Waitaki

SOCIAL EFFECTS OF IRRIGATION

Irrigation development typically has stated objectives of economic regeneration with implicit, positive social impacts. But there are a range of interwoven positive and negative impacts with the potential to affect community wellbeing.

Community effects:

- Changes in land use, land ownership and farm size (larger units)
- An increase in jobs on farm and off farm
- A change in the types of jobs and skills required
- A change in the social structure of farming
 - fewer employers, more contractors and employees
- An increase in migrant workers and cultural diversity
- Changes in the distribution of water within catchments
- Changes in social capital and social cohesion

Health, amenity and ecological effects

- Changes in landscapes and associated values, such as loss of shelter and amenity planting, physical changes in water ways and old drainage systems, and increased on and off-farm water storage
- Discharges of nutrients into ground and surface water with negative effects on water quality, ecological values and amenity values
- Consequent negative effects on cultural and recreational uses of waterways including contact recreation and food gathering
- Consequent effects on groundwater quality and supplies of drinking water for households and communities, with increased risks to human health



Irrigation storage pond used for recreation, Waitaki Valley

Key References

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