

Collaborative Governance and Accountability

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Paper: INTRODUCTION

Collaborative governance approaches involve different accountabilities for the achievement of community outcomes. Command-and-control systems (hierarchical governance) have clear lines of accountability: the regulatory authority to the community through public reporting and election processes; regulatory agency to their governing body; and consent holders to the regulatory authority. This is referred to as “vertical accountability”.

In collaborative governance approaches accountability arrangements are more diffuse. There are multiple stakeholders with greater involvement in decision making and implementation. While vertical accountabilities may remain, for collaborative governance “horizontal accountability” also exists between consent holders to each other, between consent holders and the community, and between regulatory agency and the community.

Accountability mechanisms from water management in the Canterbury region are used to describe the different accountability arrangements.

Firstly, dairy farm consent compliance is an example of the vertical accountability of consent holders to the regulatory authority. Regional environment reports, which describe the state of the environment for parameters for which the regional council has responsibilities, are an example of the regulatory authority's vertical accountability to the community.

However, hierarchical approaches were not seen as sufficient to deliver sustainable management of water when sustainability limits have been reached. Collaborative governance approaches were introduced in Canterbury to address water scarcity and water quality.

At the organisational level collaborative governance is about industry/community/government partnerships to deliver community outcomes. It is important not only to measure whether community outcomes are achieved but also to measure contributions of partners to the collaboration to ensure accountability.

Within a catchment there is an accountability of upstream users to downstream users. The Pahau is an example for water quality. This catchment was the largest contributor of nutrients to algal blooms at the mouth of the Hurunui River.

For a common water supply, there is accountability of individual users to other users. The Te Ngawai River is provided as an example where in addition to measurements of individual withdrawals, irrigators were provided with information of total withdrawals by all irrigators and on river flows to indicate the capacity of the river for out-of-river extraction.

VERTICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Dairy Farm Consent Compliance

In the 2010-11 season, 917 dairy farms were inspected: 64.9 % were fully compliant, 25.4% had minor non-compliance, and 9.7% had significant or major non-compliance. This resulted in 5 infringement

notices, 15 abatement notices and 3 prosecutions. This is classic command and control accountability.

Regional Environment Report

The purpose of Regional Environment Reports is to provide a summary of the state of the Canterbury environment relevant to the statutory responsibilities of Canterbury Regional Council. For water management the report provides results for water quantity and quality for surface and groundwater. The most recent report (Environment Canterbury 2008), was in a Resources-Processes-Outcomes-Response framework: it provided the status of a resource (e.g. enrichment status of rivers), the processes leading to that status, the expected outcomes of those processes and the responses being taken to address those outcomes.

HORIZONTAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Regional Council Contribution to Community Outcomes

The Local Government Act amendments (2002) introduced a framework for councils to work collaboratively with other public bodies and private concerns with common interests in advancing community goals (Minister for Local Government 2002). It included a new form of accountability for councils in New Zealand. In addition to traditional requirements for financial accountability, requirements for performance accountability were introduced. This required the council to:

- Define regional community outcomes through a community consultation process
- Indicate how council activities will contribute to achievement of community outcomes in a ten-year Long Term Plan
- Indicate how council proposes to work with others to further community outcomes
- Specify measures to assess progress towards outcomes
- Define measures for levels-of-service for council's activities and specify intended levels-of-service
- Report on progress on achieving outcomes every three years in a Community Outcome Report
- Compare actual levels-of-service with intended levels-of-service in an Annual Report and the reasons for any variance.

Figure 1 shows the linkage of levels of service for water management to community outcomes while Figure 2 shows the reporting of one of the levels of service.

Pahau Catchment

The council initiated a "Living Streams" programme in the Pahau catchment to address the contribution of the catchment to algal blooms in the Hurunui River. The programme has three stages: Investigation - involving data collection and a catchment report on key issues; Involvement - feeding back results of investigations to landowners and community groups, working through options to address issues and developing an action plan to meet community goals for the waterway; and Improvement - securing funding, undertaking actions, monitoring outcomes and evaluating achievements (Environment Canterbury 2009).

In the Pahau catchment, landowners' willingness to participate was enhanced by council facilitating community engagement, providing technical advice and undertaking water quality monitoring to test whether actions taken were effective. Monitoring provided horizontal accountability, e.g. after five years there had been a halving of phosphorus load (Figure 3).

How Environment Canterbury's levels of service relate to the community outcomes

	Community Outcomes						
	Water is in a healthy condition, clean and plentiful enough to support life	Business and farming activities do not harm the environment	Environment, in general, is to be looked after	Native plants and animals can thrive	Recreational needs are met	A strong economy	
1	Implementing sustainable allocation limits for groundwater	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Setting sustainable environmental flows for key rivers and streams	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Ensuring nitrate-nitrogen concentrations in groundwater meet New Zealand drinking-water standards.	✓	✓	✓			
4	Safeguarding community drinking water supply bores	✓	✓	✓		✓	
5	Improving recreational water quality at swimming sites					✓	
6	Maintaining the ecosystem health of lakes	✓		✓	✓	✓	
7	Improving the ecosystem health of lowland and foothill rivers and streams	✓		✓	✓	✓	
8	Working with territorial authorities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Authorising and monitoring the use of natural and physical resources	✓	✓	✓			✓

Figure 1

Environmental Flow Review Programme			
Key rivers or catchments	Community consultation & investigations	Notify Environmental Flow review	Set environmental flows
Hurunui River	Completed	Completed	2012/13
Waipara River	Completed	Completed	2011/12
Lake Ellesmere tributaries Pt1, Pt2, Pt3 and upper Selwyn	Commenced 2008/09	2011/12	2012/13
Waihao River	Completed	2011/12	2012/13
Pareora River	Completed	Completed	2011/12
Waiau River	Completed	2011/12	2012/13
Ashley River tributaries	Completed	Completed	Completed
Waimakariri River tributaries	Commenced 2008/09	2011/12	2012/13
Orari River	Commenced 2008/09	2011/12	2012/13
Hinds River	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Banks Peninsula	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Ophi River tributaries	Begins 2011/12	2012/13	2013/14

Source: Environment Canterbury

Figure 2

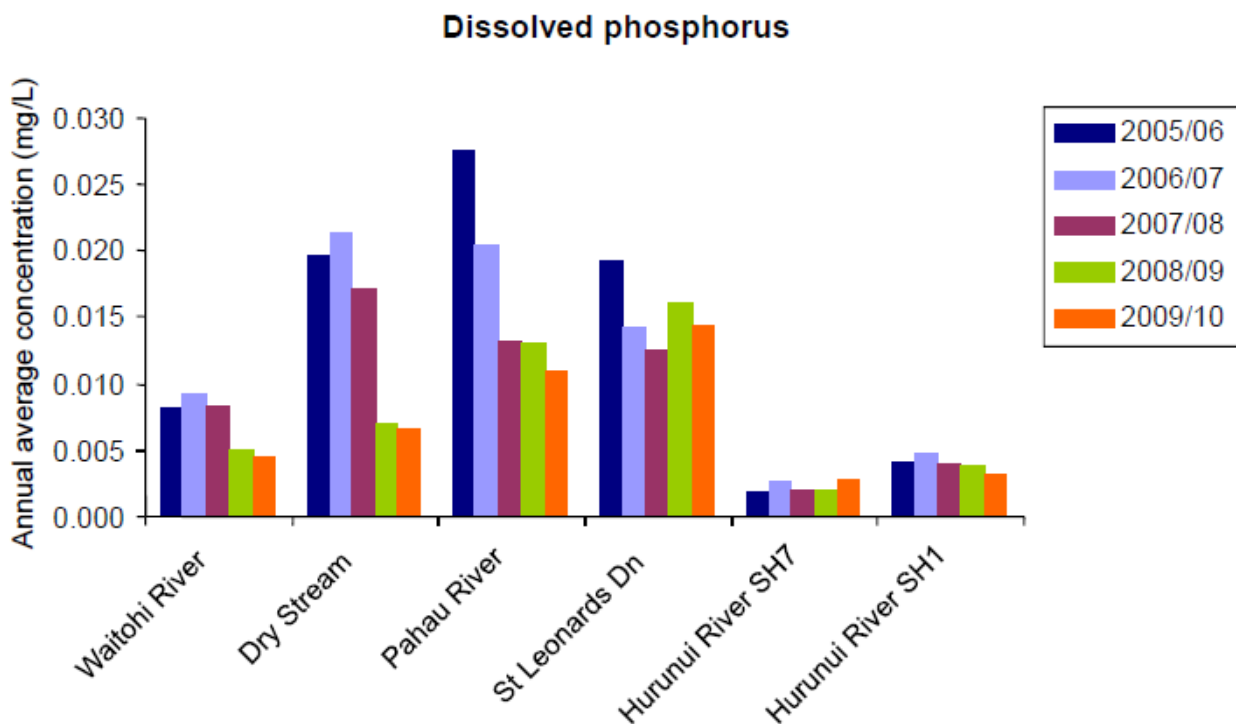


Figure 3

Te Ngawai Water Extraction Trial

Foothill rivers in Canterbury like the Te Ngawai River have a natural seasonal flow pattern with winter peaks and declining flows during summer and autumn. This means there is declining water availability during the irrigation season. Irrigation flows are restricted when specified low flows are reached.

A water user group of abstractors was formed. It developed an allocation and rostering system to control who takes water during periods when full abstraction would result in non-compliance. The established rationing procedure is day-on/day-off rostering, although there is flexibility to negotiate different short-term arrangements subject to collective agreement (Ward and Russell 2010).

Accountability was established through an on-line information system which provided telemetered data to each consent holder of their individual take, the combined take and the flow in the river at Cave. Figure 4 shows displays from the Te Ngawai water users' website.¹ This was designed to allow abstractors to maximise use of water both on an on-farm basis and as a water user group while meeting environmental flow requirements for the Te Ngawai River (Glubb and Miller 2006).

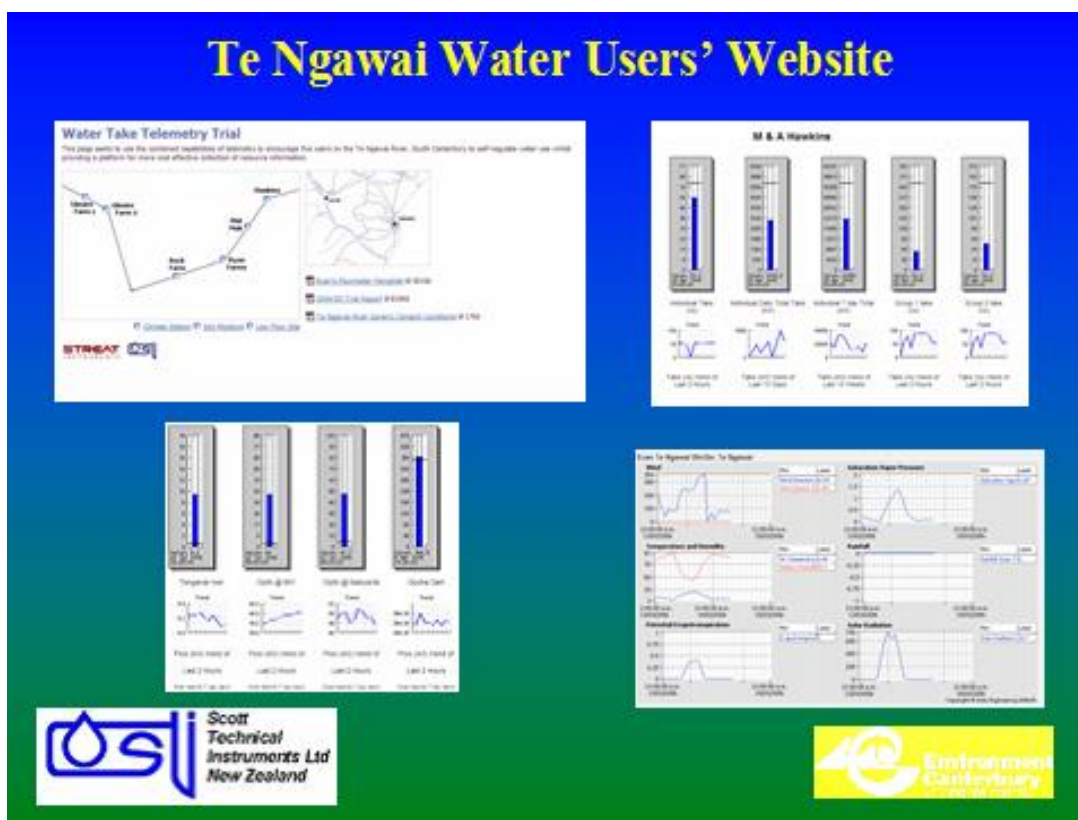


Figure 4

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Additional (horizontal) accountabilities are introduced with collaborative governance approaches. Partnership arrangements require mutual accountability to community outcomes at a higher level than the agency's mandate. They also require agency accountability for agreed contributions to community outcomes. Collective water quality management requires agreed actions and accountabilities. Management of constrained water availability needs data on individual and collective takes to compare with river flows. However the horizontal accountabilities are inherent in managing partnerships, constrained resources and cumulative effects rather than the collaborative governance arrangements themselves.

¹ The top left panel explains the trial; the top right panel shows individual and combined use; bottom left shows river flow information; and bottom right shows climate data.

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