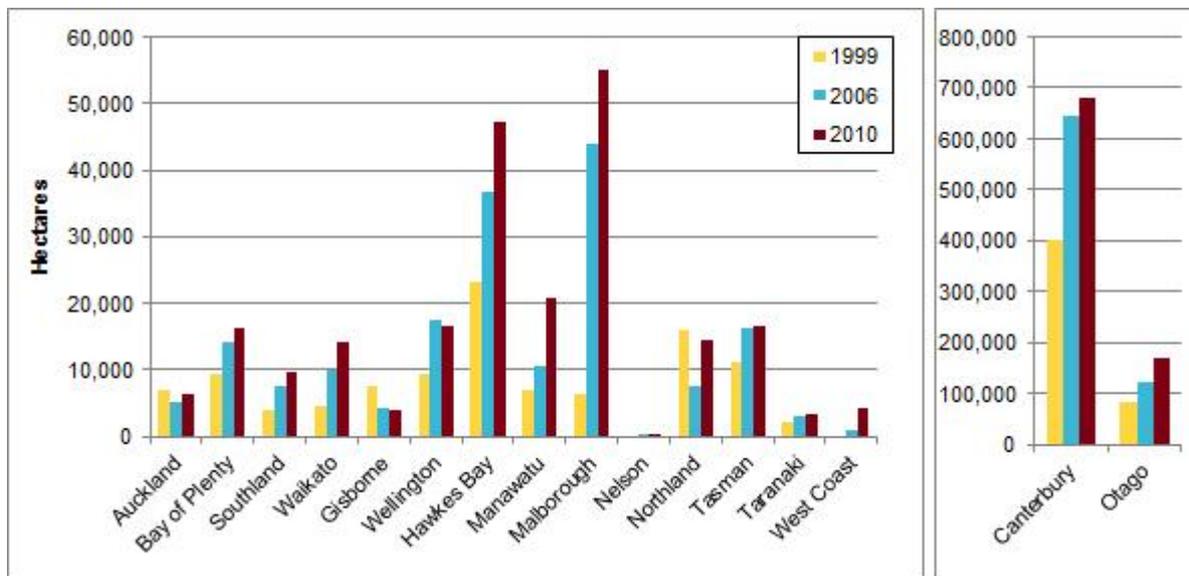


## Freshwater Policy

New Zealand is blessed with 1,100 rivers, 4,000 lakes and 600 billion cubic metres of annual precipitation. Of this, 11 billion cubic metres of freshwater is consumed (taken out and not returned) by human activity. Although this sounds, literally, like a drop in the ocean, the fact is that most of it falls where it is not consumed and conversely most is consumed where it does not fall.

The biggest consumer of freshwater is irrigation schemes, primarily for dairy pasture. Excluding hydro schemes this comprises 80% of all consented freshwater takes. In Canterbury alone the conversion of dry tussock plains into dairy pasture uses half of all our consumed water, despite the region having only 10% of the countries natural water supply.



**Consented irrigated area trends by region:**

In 2017 the Ministry for the Environment reported that 61% of rural lowland rivers have worsening nitrogen pollution, phosphorus pollution was improving for half of measured sites but we do not have sufficient data to measure e.coli trends for two thirds of our rivers.

Fisheries data shows that through either pollution, abstraction or modification, trout populations have collapsed in the Ruamahanga, Riuwaka, Takaka, North Ashburton, Irwell and Selwyn Rivers and lakes Ellesmere, Tutira and Hayes to name a few.

Land clearance and disturbance from forestry, high stocking rates and ploughing causes sediment to wash into rivers and estuaries during high rainfall. Sediment blankets spawning areas for fish and invertebrate habitat as well as reducing clarity.

Big irrigation schemes enable intensive agriculture which in turn increases run off and pollution into our surface and groundwater. To date, the Government has spent less than 2% of its funds committed to such irrigation schemes. Thus continuing to irrigate and intensify will lead to a fifty fold increase above current pollution levels.

More irrigation and nutrients from animal waste and fertilisers will lead to increased freshwater pollution over the next 30 to 50 years. Our rivers and lakes will be less likely to provide safe swimming, good fishing or to sustain food gathering in the future if we carry on as we are currently. Government freshwater standards allow for levels of nitrates toxic to fish and only sets swimmable standards for 10% of our rivers and lakes.

Our freshwater quality standards are focussed on swimmability which relates solely to e.coli levels. They do not protect healthy aquatic ecosystems and we have no freshwater quantity (minimum flow) standards.

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*Our priorities for freshwater are simple:*

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- 1. The health of our people and our environment.*
- 2. Everything else.*

The NZ Outdoors Party will instigate the following policies for freshwater

**Policy 1: Stop Creating More Pollution:** End the \$540M of public funds for irrigation schemes, diverting this money to develop truly environmentally beneficial farming practices.

**Policy 2: Keep Rivers Unmodified:** Unless there is a risk of damage to infrastructure, Councils must maintain the natural character of rivers, provide for rivers to change and meander and so stop rock walling, cross-blading, dams and diversions.

**Policy 3: Water Belongs to Everyone:** No property rights, rental, payment or trading of water. Commoditisation of freshwater leads to consolidated ownership.

**Policy 4: Polluters Pay:** Implement the 1992 Rio Declaration. Those who profit from polluting freshwater should pay for its restoration.

**Policy 5: Keep Rivers Full:** Set a minimum environmental flow standard for all rivers in NZ, below which no abstraction is permitted.

**Policy 6: Keep River Clean:** Revise the National Policy Statement – Freshwater Management (NPS-FM) to set standards and attributes at healthy freshwater ecosystem levels.