



# THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

**MEDIA RELEASE – 26 January 2024**

## **Waiho River Status and Immediate Plans**

After a multi-agency briefing this afternoon, the West Coast Regional Council has outlined its immediate plans to manage the Waiho River's swift change of course into the Tatare Stream.

After an inspection of the Waiho River following last week's flood events, WCRC engineering staff advised 95 per cent of the Waiho River was now flowing into the neighbouring Tatare Stream, the catchment north of Franz Josef township.

Immediately above where the Waiho River enters the Tatare Stream, the Waiho River is flowing entirely against the north side flood banks, leaving the south side of the Waiho River channel with no flow. The stopbanks are channelling the flow of the river directly down to the moraine as designed while also offering protection to the Franz Josef Oxidation Ponds.

Westland District Council Mayor Helen Lash said at present WDC had no real concerns about the oxidation ponds with the forecasted weather event but staff will be monitoring the situation.

West Coast Regional Council Rivers Engineer Peter Blackwood said that despite 95 per cent of the Waiho flow currently going into the Tatare Stream, future flood activity can readily alter the bed of the Waiho River and see the flow of the Waiho return into its main channel.

Programmed inspections of the south side flood banks would continue and planned north side flood defence work would continue as planned.

A LiDAR survey of ground elevations has been planned over the next week to allow the current riverbed levels to be assessed, provide comparisons to previous sediment and gravel conditions as well as provide a greater understanding of future predictions, monitoring and where to undertake any short-term protection works.

Metservice has issued an orange rain warning for Westland over the weekend, with up to 200 mm of rain forecast about the ranges.

West Coast Emergency Management and Council engineering staff will be active this weekend and will be closely monitoring the situation. Peter Blackwood said the engineering team were preparing to respond to any developing situation.

"We are vigilantly watching the situation and the forecast coming and will have staff deployed in Westland over the weekend."

West Coast Regional Council Chairperson Peter Haddock said council was ready and prepared to manage the ongoing situation.

“The Regional Council has recently recruited highly competent engineering staff and depending on the weather during the forthcoming week, we will be determining our next steps.”

“The predicted rainfall will be short lived over Friday night into Saturday morning and the township, roading network and people are at no immediate risk.”

Chairperson Haddock has reiterated his request of the new government to honour the budget allocation of the previous government’s \$8.775 million funding to complete the upgrade works on the Waiho River.

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