



Winter Newsletter | August 2023

We are excited to be celebrating our first full year of action and how much has been achieved by all the people involved. It's sometimes hard in the winter months to truly appreciate the amount of action that's happened – especially as we had an unusually wet Central Otago autumn that delayed some of our progress.

We've completed the wetland!

The wetland construction was completed at the end of June, and the team will be back in summer to landscape and remove any remaining dead willows. The wet weather made this job a bit more challenging than we expected and ended up taking four months to complete.

For those walking past on the rail trail, you will now see the design come to reality. There are sediment ponds at the start of the wetland where the three creeks enter. These are deep and wide, and designed for coarse sediments to drop out before entering the wetland. Once water enters the wetland, it spreads out into a shallow (almost) 1km channel, with deeper ponds scattered throughout. This encourages finer sediments to settle and other nutrients to be absorbed (once planted) before the water exits the wetland over a low weir and heads to Thomsons Creek.

There is a low area through the middle (with white stones) that allows water to go straight through in high floods, so we don't back water up excessively on nearby paddocks.

It's been incredible to see that the birds are already returning.

The next phase of the wetland development starts in October. We begin with planting over 45,000 carex secta, which when mature will soak up nutrients from the water. Then the construction crew will be back to finish landscaping around the outside in summer.



Wetland exit weir.

Over time the riparian areas and islands will also be planted, creating habitat for wading birds and adding to the biodiversity of the area.

A huge thanks to some pretty special people!

- ▶ Landowners Pete and Robyn McLeod who provided the land for the wetland.
- ▶ Our wetland construction project manager Brendan Sheehan from Mt Aurum Engineering who donated all his time for free for this community project.
- ▶ S&B Civil who have created a stunning wetland.
- ▶ Breen Civil who built our exit weir.
- ▶ Chris Robinson from Central Excavating who prepared our site by draining the ponds and removing the willows.

Keep an eye out on our Facebook page for details of the next phase of work over the summer and how you can get involved.



Celebrating the construction of the wetland on 30 June – members of Thomsons committee, Breen Construction, S&B Civil, Brendan Sheehan (Mt Aurum Engineering), Landowner Pete McLeod.

Check out this great summary of what we've achieved



Year 1 Achievements

TIMELINE

MARCH 2022

Secured DOC grant for native kōwhai planting in local schools.
Wetland willows sprayed.

MAY 2022

Secured \$40k ORC grant for fish barrier construction.

JUNE 2022

Manuhēria Exemplar Governance Group endorsed the wetland building.

JULY 2022

Organised winter grazing field day with Beef & Lamb and ORC.
Omakau School start monthly water monitoring programme around the wetland.

AUGUST 2022

Deed signed by MCG.
Project budget confirmed by MFE.

SEPTEMBER 2022

Planted 600 carex secta with help from key stakeholders.
Secured \$10k ORC grant to cover consent processing – second grant awarded in November.

OCTOBER 2022

Completed sediment trap design with NIWA.
Project Facebook page goes live.
Held Aquavan event for local schools, electric fishing and project launch public community evening.

DECEMBER 2022

Attained consents for the first stage of wetland works.
Signed off official Thomsons logo.
Sent out inaugural project stakeholder update.
Installed project info signage along the rail trail.
Wetland site ponds drained.

JANUARY 2023

Obtained fish barrier consent.
Wetland willows removed.
Survey of wetland site.
Nurseries start growing our 45,000 wetland carex secta.
Minister David Parker visits wetland site.

FEBRUARY 2023

Started fish barrier and wetland construction.
Community engagement 125th A&P show alongside Ida Valley and Manuhēria Exemplar Groups.

MARCH 2023

Completed fish barrier work.
Organised two wetland open day events and tour for locals.
Presentation to Otago Central Rail Trail Trust.

APRIL 2023

Hosted successful fish barrier launch event.
Generated significant media coverage.
Sent out inaugural newsletter.

MAY 2023

Offered riparian fencing and planting support to catchment farmers.
Planting trial of 1700 carex secta in the wetland.

JUNE 2023

Completed weir construction and exit weir of the wetland.
Removed trout above the fish barrier to preserve native fish population.

KEY STATS



Wetland built



Fish barrier built

ACTION ON THE GROUND



5409 People hours worked



3 Consents granted



2100 Plants planted



36,000m Fencing materials



Water monitoring
13 sampling rounds at 7 sites



Fish removed above barrier
15 trout

WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES



16 Committee Meetings



5 Propagation Workshops attended by 40 people

8 Visits

6 Events



4 BBQs



3 Planting Days

19 Organisations directly involved in, or engaged with, Thomsons

6 Agencies (MfE, DOC, Fish & Game, ORC, CODC, iwi)
2 Schools (Omakau and Poolburn)
2 Big businesses (NIWA, Fonterra)
7 Organisations (QEII, Otago Uni, Contact Energy, Rail Trail Trust, Lions, Enviroschools, OCC)
2 Catchment Groups (Tiaki Maniototo, MIC)



10 Local businesses



23 Contractors

MANAGING THE MONEY



Total budget
\$1.7M
(3 year budget is \$2.8 million)
Spend to date \$1.35M



2 Donations

4 Grants

SHARING THE MAHI



6 News articles



2 Newsletters



Drone footage
75 clips



56 Facebook posts

5 Press Releases

2 Factsheets



We've installed the fish barrier!

The fish barrier was completed in March and will protect an area upstream which has the most galaxiids in the catchment, by preventing trout and perch moving upstream. There are also trout in the headwaters of Thomsons, but during the summer there is a significant dry stretch in the creek upstream of Mawhinny Road which stops trout moving downstream. This gives the galaxiids below this reach and above the fish barrier the opportunity to live in relative peace.

Pete Ravenscroft from ORC led a team on 16 June that included Brent Dungey (for ORC), and Fish and Game Otago's Ben Sowry and Mason Court, in very cold conditions to remove trout from above the fish barrier in Thomsons Creek. Thanks for an amazing effort in those cold June conditions.

Overall, we caught fifteen brown trout, four rainbow trout, four long-finned eels and saw a couple hundred Central Otago roundhead galaxias. Pete Ravenscroft commented that *"The results were probably disappointing but considering the cold temperatures and high flows I wouldn't have expected too much else. Not only humans shut down in the cold weather so do fish. We will come back when flows have dropped and when temperatures increase"*.

The team will be back next summer to do another run.

Removed

- ▶ Brown trout x 15
- ▶ Rainbow x 4

Visual (and left in creek)

- ▶ Galaxid x 200
- ▶ Upland bullies x 30
- ▶ Eels x 4



Fencing works begin

We are supporting landowners in the catchment with fencing materials to fence key galaxiid and riparian sites. This supports the fencing many of the farmers have completed over the years. We began to roll out the fencing materials in May and will continue to provide more over the coming months. Farmers are making a significant contribution in most cases doing the fencing labour themselves which represents a 30% grant and 70% farmer contribution. Thank you to our amazing local farmers!

So far 13 landowners have been involved and the fencing of 33km is currently underway. If you're a farmer reading this who has land next to waterways in Thomsons catchment and want to get involved, please contact our fencing co-ordinator Haines Battrick on 021 448 001.

Dan & Christie Beck and their kids Joey and Penny are part of the fencing project. Asked about why the family decided to get involved, the Beck family said *"The Becks of Chester mains Road are beyond stoked with being part of the Thomson Catchment Project. As relative newcomers to 'the country' we have learnt heaps about our environment and the importance of giving our land the respect it deserves"*.



Farmer George Naylor standing next to his newly installed fence.



Joey and Penny eagerly inspect the creek for signs of native wildlife!

George Naylor is also part of the project and commented *"We were lucky enough to receive two grants from ORC as part of the Thomsons Catchment Project. The main one to fence off around our main waterways (Chandlers Creek) and dam. With the ever increasing costs of fencing and contractors, we grabbed the opportunity with both hands. It was always on our to do list but finding the funds and the time to complete the job was proving difficult.*

Working with both Haines and Nicola has made it both easy and streamlined. Working together we have made the practical and ethical decision to retire a small area of wetland approx 6000m² on our eastern boundary that only ever grew willows and bull rushes. I'm hoping to approach the local primary school to help plant it when the fencing and willow trees removed. We appreciate the ongoing support and advice."

Upcoming events

Potting up carex secta

- ▶ Saturday 5 August, from 10am to 11am
- ▶ Fiona's house in Alexandra
- ▶ RSVP to Fiona on 027 434 7569

Kate Wilson from the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust has donated a tray of carex secta seedlings to be potted. Come along for an hour to help us and enjoy coffee and cake.



Omakau School Planting Day

- ▶ Thursday 24 August
- ▶ If you would like to help, please contact Nicola McGrouther on 027 493 9500 for more details.

The Gillespies have been working with Omakau School over the past three years to plant a gully on their property. Each year they do something a little different with the tamariki, from planting to propagation and water quality activities to farm tours. This year, they are calling for adults to come and help to teach the children (and school parents) how to plant properly.

And if you're reading this and fancy sponsoring a community shared lunch, then please get in touch!



Last year's planting day.

Nga mihi and thank you for reading our newsletter. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to check out our [Facebook page](#), the website or contact Nicola McGrouther on 0274 939 500.



Thomsons Catchment Project – you can get involved too.



FOLLOW US AT [ThomsonsCatchmentProject](#)

OR FIND OUT MORE ABOUT US AT

www.mcwater.co.nz/Thomsons-Catchment-Project

Te Taiao:

Thinking about the environment in this way encourages us to aspire to a future where humanity and the natural world sustain each other in an interconnected relationship of respect, and we all act as land stewards.