

Update Mackenzie Guardians Inc. - April 2017



Dear Mackenzie Guardians and supporters,

The Mackenzie District Plan Change 13 decision was released by The Environment Court before Easter on 13 April 2017. We welcome the decision, it is hugely important and the best we could have hoped for given the scope of the case, which was limited to certain amendments to the Plan.

Who would have thought it would take 8 years, since the group was formed in 2009, to finally see the Court recognise the threats to the Mackenzie's outstanding natural landscape (ONL) and its unique ecological values, and introduce strong rules to halt the destruction.

Firstly a heartfelt **thanks** to the Guardians and friends who have helped in so many ways supporting the work of the Society. You have encouraged, helped fund the battles, made individual submissions, attended the various hearings, and in particular the PC 13 Hearing which was held in February this year.

Secondly a huge thanks to the experts who provided evidence for the Society at the PC 13 hearing. I am sure you will agree we were lucky to be able to engage some of the best experts in the country, landscape architect Di Lucas, ecologist Susan Walker, pastoral ecologist Bruce Allan and lawyer Ruby Haazen. Well done the expert team!

There are others to thank....the EDS team of landscape architect Stephen Brown, planner Peter Reaburn, and lawyers Madeleine Wright and Rob Enright. They were superb. The Guardians have sent a letter of thanks to Lou Sanson of DOC for the legal, planning and ecological evidence of Susan Newell, Viv Smith, Keith Briden, Dean Nelson and Nicholas Head. DOC's participation was so valuable. Thanks also to Forest and Bird, especially Jen Miller. F&B had to withdraw from the PC13 process to keep Judge Jackson on the case. Jen was always supportive of, and helpful to the Guardians. She is a wonderfully strong voice for nature, always speaking out publically to defend the Mackenzie.

Last but not least, thanks to the Ministry for the Environment who through their ELA fund provided a great chunk of the funding needed for the Guardians to participate in the Court process. The ELA funding was not quite enough leaving our reserves fairly

depleted, but we hope to build these up over time. It has been such an achievement to be able to stay the distance, and give the Mackenzie the voice it deserves.

See MG's website for the Court decision, and the evidence of all parties as well as the recent media articles on PC 13.

While much of the decision is about planning and legal matters some key points are:

- The Court recognised that fragmentation of the empty, open landscape is a significant threat to the Basin's character and visual amenity. Farm buildings are enabled in Farm Base Areas only (i.e. around an existing homestead cluster) and areas of low visual vulnerability, subject to standards and protection of environmental values. Non-farm buildings outside of the Farm Base Areas to be strongly discouraged.
- Significant areas have been set aside where buildings, irrigators and exotic trees are to be avoided eg Scenic Grassland Areas and Scenic Viewing Areas.
- No pivot irrigators within Scenic Viewing Areas, Scenic Grasslands, Sites of Natural Significance or Lakeside Protection Areas. In all other areas pivots should be set back 250m from SH 8, the Haldon Rd, Godley Peaks Rd, and Lilybank Rd.
- Require buildings to be set back from roads, particularly state highways, and manage location of irrigators to avoid screening views of the ONL.
- Avoid clearance, cultivation, over sowing in Scenic Viewing Areas, Scenic Grasslands and tussock grasslands adjacent to state highways and tourist roads. (See map of these special areas attached as Appendix A. of the decision).
- Amended definition for pastoral intensification which includes cultivation, irrigation, direct drilling, over-sowing and topdressing.
- From para 462 is an interesting economic debate about the costs and benefits of using the land and the landscape. From para 478 detail about the economics of use of land and water.
- The Court recognised that the Basin contains 83 threatened or at risk species of native plant in addition to the more common endemic plants such as the tussock species. The decision also recognised the need for `large interconnected ecosystems.`
- At para 555 the Court recognised that large areas with inherent values are being lost quickly, and that there is a strong ecological (and economic) case for an immediate moratorium by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, on further freeholding of any land in the Mackenzie Basin containing outwash gravels.

We are waiting for an expert summary of the decision. Will send that later.

Finally, the Mackenzie Guardians' secretary Liz Weir is heading off overseas for a 6 months, well-deserved trip. Thanks Liz for all your valuable and willing help. Bon voyage!

Best wishes to all. Rosalie.

<http://mackenzieguardians.co.nz/>