



Mainland to Northland – and back again

It's the age-old question in a job interview: 'How well do you work in a team environment?'

For most people, the answer would be something neither here nor there – trying not to come across as either too independent or too willing to delegate tasks.

But for our Orari Temuka Opihi Pareora (OTOP) zone lead – and former Armed Offenders Squad member – Brian Reeves, the answer is altogether different.

"The Armed Offenders Squad was a well-oiled machine in high-intensity situations where the entire reason it worked was because we relied on one another," he explained.

"When people ask about an example of a team I've been in, I use that.

"I mean, you're literally having to trust your teammates with your life every time you're called out to an incident."

The question surfaced during his interview for the OTOP zone lead position about 18 months ago.

A zone lead's work is varied, Brian said, but generally entails working to achieve greater connectivity between the zone team and the community they represent.

The zone teams consists of Environment Canterbury staff tasked with making environmental gains working with local organisations, landowners and members of the public.

Brian drives and supports this multi-disciplinary team and, together with his colleagues in the Timaru office, works to make a positive difference in South Canterbury.

Some of the big challenges in the OTOP zone include the ongoing public transport trial, water quality and quantity, and air quality.

A mobile childhood

From early on in his life, Brian knew he wanted to be a part of a team carrying out meaningful work.

"It was quite a transient childhood; my father was in the Air Force. So, wherever bases were, we were – in fact I went to primary school in Singapore. Then onto Ohakea, Woodbourne, and Wigram where I attended Sockburn Primary, and where we kind of set up base.

"I guess I always had a deep-seated desire to join the police. I think that came from being a cub and an air scout on the

bases, and I was actually only one step away from joining the air force at one point.

"From about 17, I was also playing Southern League football (a now defunct whole-of-South-Island league), where I had two teammates in the police too, and I just thought the world of them. I thought to myself, 'I want to do a meaningful job like them,'" he said.

But having applied to join the force in Christchurch, he was told he had "no chance", as "everyone who applied wanted to be in Christchurch."

So, Brian packed his car and drove to Auckland where he rented a flat – but he needed a part-time job to fund his stay.

"I was driving around the Ellerslie/One Tree Hill area where I saw a guy in a commercial mower. I tapped on the window and basically asked him if he knew of any work going.

"He asked did I know how to use a mower, I lied and said I did, and I became a groundsman for a while, while I trained to become a policeman," he said.

A change of scene

A few jobs came and went before Brian applied to become a resource management officer (RMO) at Environment Canterbury in the Timaru office.

"I'd always been interested in that and I knew some people who were there already. I admired what ECan did and how they went about dealing with dairy farmers. So, I was lucky enough to get that and I did it for 18 months and then tiptoed into incident response."

Incident responders are the first on call to reported events like pollution or discharge breaches.

"Soon after (the move to incident response) there was a chance offered to become a zone lead and I realised I could utilise some life skills that I wouldn't in other roles.

"I think I bring life experience, empathy and practical thinking in dealing with problems.

"My philosophy is that if someone's asking for help why would we not try and make their life a bit easier?"

For any questions related to air quality, land or water in the OTOP zone, you can contact Brian at brian.reeves@ecan.govt.nz



Got consent to farm? Not sure if you need it? It's time to check

We're on the right track

More than 1000 farmers from all over Canterbury have successfully applied for resource consent for their farm and are achieving Good Management Practice.

If you're one of them – nice work! If not, you may need to apply for a land use consent to farm.

But I don't need consent to farm... do I?

Rules around farming consents have changed throughout Canterbury, and many farms that didn't require consent in the past may need consent now, and will need to apply soon.

Whether you require consent will depend on the size of the farm, the sub region and what activities you undertake. It's your responsibility to identify if you need a land use consent to farm, and to apply for consent in time. But don't worry, we're here to help.

For more information visit the Farmers' Hub www.ecan.govt.nz/farmershub or call 0800 324 636.



It all starts on the Farmers' Hub

We know it can sound confusing. That's why Environment Canterbury's Farmers' Hub is designed for you to be able to best determine your responsibilities around consent to farm. Just search for the Canterbury Farmers Hub on the ECan website and follow the five steps.

1) Determine whether you need land use consent to farm

On the Farmers' Hub, look for the specific rules and information around land use consent to farm for your zone. Each zone has its own rules, and some have changed in the last few years, so be sure to identify your area. You can also contact your local ECan Zone Team or Customer Services to get more clarification on what applies to your farm.

2) Implement Good Management Practices on your farm

The Primary Industry Sector has a set of agreed GMPs that can be used to improve water quality. Take a look at www.ecan.govt.nz/gmp for tips, or check with Dairy NZ, Beef + Lamb, or your industry group for resources specific to your farming operation.

3) Prepare your nutrient budget

Most farms requiring consent need to prepare a nitrogen baseline using Overseer FM and may need to calculate a Baseline GMP Loss Rate for their farm using the Farm Portal. A nutrient management consultant can talk you through this and will be able to prepare these for you.

4) Create your FEP

All farmers requiring a land use consent to farm will need to prepare a Farm Environment Plan (FEP). Approved templates and industry help can be found on the Farmers' Hub.

5) Apply for your land use consent to farm

Ready to apply for resource consent? Great! We offer a free one-hour pre-application consultation to help you prepare. You or your consultant can book these with the ECan Customer Services team.

Buckets prove to their worth in irrigation efficiency for Kaikōura District

Kaikōura farmers wanting to test the efficiency of their irrigation equipment were able to do so, with the support of Kaikōura Plains Recovery Project (KPRP). Bucket testing took place, with buckets being placed over an area of pasture that was being irrigated. Data on volume of water in each bucket was gathered and farmers were able to see gaps in the irrigators efficiency and improve their irrigation management.

Pete Bradshaw, Environment Canterbury Kaikōura Land Management Advisor said that Kaikōura farmers are pretty “on to it” when it comes to irrigating, and “they have a high level of awareness for their systems and what’s happening on the ground, while being open to making adjustments accordingly.”

KPRP was established after the November 2016 earthquakes caused significant damage in the district. Several farms suffered extensive damage and many more suffered ground damage, drainage issues, the emergence of springs, sinkholes, localised flooding and damage to stream banks and riparian areas.

The project aims to source technical advice and expertise to provide support and direction for farmers and landowners to make informed decisions about these post-quake land management issues. Funded for three-years by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), the project is farmer led, with a governance group made up of local farmers, community representative.



Bucket testing in Kaikōura – simple and effective

So far, the project has provided local farmers with advice and support in LiDAR data to help ascertain how much the ground levels of the land had changed since the 2016 earthquakes, drainage demonstration sites and solutions, irrigation efficiency, improving practices in newly wet conditions and more.

The project is supported by Environment Canterbury, Fonterra and DairyNZ.

Residents attend an irrigation efficiency workshop in Kaikōura.

