

RON COCKS MEMORIAL AWARD

FOR OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP IN IRRIGATION

Gavin Dann

2018 RON COCKS MEMORIAL AWARD WINNER

Gavin Dann has made a considerable contribution to irrigation in Central Otago through the leadership he has provided to the Last Chance Irrigation Company. He is one of two winners of the Ron Cocks Memorial Award in 2018. The award is given for outstanding leadership in irrigation.



Gavin was previously a science/biology teacher and Deputy Principal of Dunstan High School in Alexandra. He lives on a lifestyle block which is supplied by Wrights Race from Conroys Dam. Prior to the Crown's sale of the scheme to the irrigators he had become Chairman of the irrigation group which managed this section of water races.

LAST CHANCE IRRIGATION COMPANY

The Last Chance Irrigation Company uses snow melt from the Old Man Range for irrigation. Water is delivered to farms north of the range through a water race network which was originally built in gold mining days and through natural creeks. Two concrete arch dams were built during the depression which are used to store water – Conroys Dam and Butchers Dam.

The water race and creek irrigation network was managed by the government as five separate networks until the 1980s when the management of the system was sold back to farmers and the Last Chance Irrigation Company was formed. The company brought the management of the five sections into one company, with around 100 shareholders.

At the time the company was formed in around 1990, Gavin was the Chairman of the Conroys Section Committee. He managed that section's scheme operations and maintenance, in conjunction with several others. Gavin was a valuable member of the original Last Chance Irrigation group which undertook negotiations with the Crown for the purchase and settlement of the scheme.

Gavin was elected to the Last Chance Irrigation Company Board in 1997, and was elected Chairman of the Board from 2007 until his retirement in 2011. The Last Chance Irrigation Company serves orchardists, sheep, deer and beef farmers. As he didn't have a vested interest in any one sector Gavin was seen as an independent figure.

INNOVATIONS BY LAST CHANCE IRRIGATION COMPANY

Gavin is forward thinking, a good administrator and communicator and has been the driving force behind a number of initiatives to improve the Last Chance Irrigation Company's operations.

An idea he came up with and pursued with a fellow irrigator was to retake run-off flood irrigation water from Butchers Dam irrigators and pipe it through a hill and

across a valley to the lower Conroys catchment to supplement their supply. He managed to successfully negotiate to have the Crown fund this 'Link Race' pipe as part of the Last Chance Company settlement. Gavin also promoted and arranged the construction of a storage dam to save and feed water to this Link Race. This helps maintain more constant flows to irrigators and has proved invaluable over the past summer's drought.

Gavin has also proactively supported the introduction of telemetry to measure and monitor flows, and helped improve the scheme's administration and operation systems. Gavin brings respect for others, and skills to promote good relationships between shareholders, stakeholders and directors to his role. He is also very forward looking and takes steps to trouble shoot issues before they escalate, and develop a scheme approach to issues on the horizon.

Gavin was heavily involved in preparing new resource consent applications and tidying up or replacing Water Permits during development of the company's water takes and retakes over the years. He also presented submissions on behalf of the company at resource consent hearings.

DEVELOPING A SAFE DRINKING WATER SUPPLY

Historically scheme members had used irrigation water for their drinking water. Gavin led a project to find a safe alternative drinking water source. An underground water source was found. Easements had to be created so that a bore could be developed and water delivered to properties. This water supply serves around 60 households.

Gavin has been managing the operation of this community water supply since it was established in 1990, and his wife Cathy is the long-serving secretary of the domestic supply scheme. He also prepared a Water Safety Management Plan for the community scheme. His work has saved a considerable amount in consultant's fees. The scheme is fully compliant with the New Zealand Drinking Water Standards.

The Last Chance Community Drinking Water Scheme was recently made a standalone incorporated society, with Gavin driving this process. The drinking water scheme has state of the art telemetry and metering, no debt and over \$100,000 in the bank as a result of Gavin's leadership.

