

## **Hawksbury Lagoon update August**

Given recent events, I thought it might be timely to look at past flood events. The earliest recording I could find was for February 1868. The news article related more to the river than the lagoon reporting the loss of 1000 – 1500 sheep at Cherry Farm as well as “a good deal of fencing injured and destroyed”. The sandspit (I presume at the Karitane outlet for the river) “presents a most lamentable picture. Where once stood several stores there remains barely a remnant of anything”. Half of the Waikouaiti Bridge was apparently located downstream. In 1888 another flood event mentions that the water rose to an “unusual height” and all the houses on the lagoon had one to two feet of water in them with “Mr Duncan’s butcher shop having a large stream of water running through it, with the main road to the foot of the hill presenting the appearance of a miniature lake”. The Otago Regional Council reports more recently large floods have occurred locally in 1968, 1980, 1986, 1987, 1993, 1994, 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2015.

This most recent high rainfall event, had water over the causeways in several places on the lagoon with the Scotia Street causeway all but disappearing. I’ve lived here forty years and never seen this happen before. With the ground already saturated from higher than usual rainfall this year, the existing lagoon water level high, even though the outlet has been opened many times this year, and the exceptional weather event which occurred, a month’s rainfall fell within a few hours, it was no surprise that the water rose to such an extraordinary level. Post Office Creek was pouring volumes of water out to sea very early on, helped no doubt by the outlet already being open. As soon as the water level dropped below the culverts, the main body of the lagoon began to empty very quickly. The lagoon can absorb huge volumes of excess water, which is an important role of wetlands and the scouring effect of rapid water movement will remove excess sediment within the lagoon. The unfortunate flooding at the Stewart Street corner is due more to the size of the culvert under the road than to the lagoon water level and although I haven’t heard of any other serious property flooding, I’m sure some properties were inundated, especially in Stewart Street. Photos of the lagoon in flood are on our website [www.hawksburylagoon.org.nz](http://www.hawksburylagoon.org.nz)

Finally, we will have the Scotia Street causeway resurfaced with limechip at the beginning of August, thank goodness it hadn’t already been done, and plan to resurface the other causeway before next winter. This will cost around \$1500. If anyone feels compelled to contribute to this work you could donate via our online bank account 031737002079900. We would be most appreciative.

Shirley McKewen

Chair