



## **MEDIA RELEASE – 20 May 2019**

### **Alternative justice outcome reached for Westland District Council**

Westland District Council has paid nearly \$30,000 in reparation following discharges, which were in breach of the resource consent conditions and the Resource Management Act, from the Franz Josef sewerage system to the Waiho riverbed last year.

The West Coast Regional Council laid charges against the Westland District Council in the District Court in September 2018, for the discharge of contaminants (sewerage effluent) to, and disturbance of, the riverbed.

The Westland District Council met the criteria for the alternative justice pathway under the Regional Council's Compliance and Enforcement Policy, and the result has been described by the Regional Council's Consents and Compliance Manager, Heather McKay, as a good outcome for the community.

"Rather than two Council's spending significant time and money going through a lengthy court process, an outcome with direct benefits to the Franz Josef community has been agreed," said Ms McKay.

Representatives from the Westland District Council, West Coast Regional Council, Te Rūnanga o Mākaawhio, the Department of Conservation and the Franz Josef Community Council Executive were involved in the process, facilitated by an independent court approved facilitator.

Westland District Council acknowledges that there have been ongoing issues with the Franz Josef sewerage system and the system is currently undergoing a significant upgrade which will avoid future issues of this nature.

"The overflow incident was an unfortunate event and had been recognised as a potential risk for many years due to the ground conditions in the receiving environment," said David Inwood, Westland District Council Group Manager District Assets. "We certainly look forward to commissioning the new wastewater treatment plant, including a new treated wastewater receiving environment, using a more reliable and compliant methodology."

The Franz Josef community was identified as the primary beneficiary of the financial payments, due to the ongoing impacts within the community. Franz Josef Community Council representative Kathy Hartshorne said that she was pleased that the community was involved in the process.

"Going through this process has meant the community has had the opportunity to be part of the outcome and they will benefit from this process."

As a result of the successful alternative justice process, charges against the Westland District Council have been withdrawn.

The payment made by Westland District Council includes a \$20,000 payment to the Franz Josef community to contribute to the upgrade of the community hall, as well as \$9,262 paid to the West Coast Regional Council for costs associated with the prosecution and alternative justice process.

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