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MEDIA RELEASE

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North Canterbury farmers Roger and Francie Taylor are planting trees along a polluted stream running through their property at Coalgate, upstream of the Selwyn River and Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere.

Since the Taylors settled at Glendore seven years ago, water quality has abruptly declined as much of the farm's 600-hectare watershed was converted from sheep and beef to intensive dairying. Happy Jack Creek where their grandchildren once swam has filled with stinking sediment.

The creek runs into the Selwyn River near Hororata then feeds into Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere. The Whakaora Te Waihora (www.tewaihora.org) programme led by Ngāi Tahu and Environment Canterbury is working to reverse the declining health of the lake caused by increasing inflows of nutrients and sediment.

Selwyn-Waihora Zone Committee Chairman and Selwyn District Councillor Pat McEvedy says efforts to clean up Te Waihora rely on people like the Taylors doing good work along the length of the catchment.

Central Plains Water (CPW) plans to start building a head race for its new irrigation scheme on the Taylors' property this summer. As shareholders, they are looking forward to the financial and social benefits that the scheme will bring to the district.

Mr McEvedy says CPW will carry alpine surface water to the Selwyn-Waihora Zone, improving the flow of lowland streams and the health of Te Waihora. The effects of intensification will be managed by Variation 1 to the proposed Land & Water Regional Plan, including policies and rules towards achieving community goals for freshwater set under the collaborative Canterbury Water Management Strategy.

The Honda TreeFund this year contributed \$4000 towards planting and fencing native trees, shrubs and grasses at Glendore, raised by Honda New Zealand and its agents in Christchurch and Timaru.

Six years before settling on the 56-hectare property, the Taylors started clearing debris from streams, spraying gorse and planting 9000 native plants beside waterways. The planting cost some \$35,000 and eight months of their time, plus follow-up weed control.

Black beech, totara, ribbonwood, kowhai and kahikatea now grace the banks of Happy Jack Creek together with shrubby species grown by Southern Woods Tree Nursery from seeds and cuttings collected in the area. Newer plantings along a tributary and a hillside spring include native pittosporum, toe toe, flax, carex and coprosma.

Mr Taylor says close to 100 per cent of trees have survived since he started using protective guards with built-in woollen mulch pads to exclude pests and herbicide spray while holding moisture.

“Fencing sure took away the worry about stock getting stuck in waterways,” he said. “And we’re enjoying an increase in native skinks, weta and birds including kingfishers and bellbirds.”

As well as planting on their own property, the Taylors attend Te Ara Kakariki-Greenway Canterbury Trust planting days. These aim to increase the native vegetation that remains on the Canterbury Plains, especially near the Selwyn River.

Environment Canterbury also awarded the Taylors \$2000 from its Canterbury Biodiversity fund in 2012 and Selwyn District Council has contributed about \$6000 from its Natural Environment Fund over the last four years. Protecting and restoring native ecosystems and healthy waterways are among the goals of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy.

Honda plantings benefit birds

Environment Canterbury will this year distribute \$40,000 raised by Honda New Zealand and Honda dealerships for native planting projects in Canterbury. In 2013-14 a similar amount was distributed to 20 community and school projects from the Kaikoura district to Timaru, supporting the planting of 12,300 native trees.

Community projects protecting and enhancing waterways and native ecosystems are eligible.

“The Honda TreeFund is win-win, offsetting carbon emissions from vehicles while returning native vegetation to Canterbury,” said Environment Canterbury biodiversity team leader Jo Abbott. “Plantings connect the Canterbury foothills with the plains and provide nectar, fruit and seeds for birds.”

Since April 2004, the Honda TreeFund has funded more than 590,000 trees around New Zealand. For every new Honda sold, Honda New Zealand allocates regional councils around the country funding for 10 native trees. Local agents add funds for another three and Honda buyers are invited to contribute.

Environment Canterbury also provides funding for planting through its Immediate Steps programme – dedicated to restoring waterways and native vegetation – and the Canterbury Biodiversity Fund, prioritising ecosystems with existing high values such as native bush and braided rivers.

To find out more about the Honda TreeFund, go to ecan.govt.nz/biodiversity/funding or contact the Environment Canterbury biodiversity team via 0800 324 636.