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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Otago Fish & Game disappointed at ORC Water Quality standards being delayed**

April 2020 was the deadline for implementation of new water quality standards that set rules to limit contaminant and sediment run-off from rural properties into waterways. In putting the plan change in place, this was a promise to the public that water quality would be improved.

Yesterday, the ORC signalled it was going to extend this deadline out to 2023.

Otago Fish & Game Environmental Officer Nigel Paragreen says it has been difficult to get information on the implementation plan for 6A.

“Fish and Game has been requesting stakeholder meetings and updates from the ORC for years but has consistently been held at arm’s length. I can’t help but think this outcome might have been avoided had more effort been put into implementation,” says Paragreen.

“Having said that, the ORC has serious issues to contend with in the plan change and solutions need to be found for those.”

Landholders need certainty in how the rules will be implemented. Similarly, the community needs certainty that the environment will be protected, and meaningful progress is being made towards improving water quality.

Otago Fish and Game Chief Executive Ian Hadland says “We’ve waited patiently for water quality regulations to come into force and expected to see an improvement when they did. Now we’re on the final stretch and it seems like the finishing line is being moved on us.”

“To restore the public’s faith, the ORC must demonstrate that this is not just another delay which will enable a continuation of business as usual. The ORC should take action, in the immediate, to keep their promise of improved water quality,” said Hadland.

If this were to happen, Mr Paragreen thinks the extension may be positive.

“While they organise long term solutions, the ORC can implement practical changes to the water plan that we know will improve water quality. Requiring effective setbacks on

intensive land uses would be an excellent place to start. Setbacks are already required for forestry; it makes sense to require it of other intensive land uses,” says Paragreen.

**ENDS**

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***WHAT IS FISH & GAME?***

*Fish & Game is a statutory public entity, not a lobby group. It was established by Parliament under the Conservation Act, to manage, maintain and enhance sports fish and game birds and their habitats. It has specific responsibilities under Acts of Parliament, including the Conservation, Resource Management, Walking Access, Public Finance and Overseas Investment Acts.*

*The Otago Fish & Game Council represents the interests of anglers and game bird hunters in the Otago region. The Otago Council, the 11 other regional Fish & Game councils along with the NZ Council are collectively known as Fish & Game New Zealand. Fish & Game receives no money from the government. All funding is provided by freshwater anglers and game bird hunters – a “user pays, user says” tradition dating back 150 years.*