



Jane Strang the project manager of the Clifton Falls Walkway project – in her happy place

Clifton Falls Walkway Project – Connecting people and water

A passion for planting natives and wanting to encourage people to establish a connection to water sparked an idea for a North Otago farmer.

Jane and Lyndon Strang are dairy farmers at their property 'Maruakoa' inland of Oamaru which boundaries some of the Kakanui River and popular Clifton Falls swimming hole. Mrs Strang said their family, now teenage children, have many special memories of growing up having adventures on the river.

"It was something we always enjoyed and still do, and we're lucky to be able to share it with our children."

However, much of the river was inaccessible due to being a stock exclusion zone for many years and in places had a 30-metre buffer zone making it impossible to access the river, where maintenance spraying could not reach.

A desire for people to enjoy the river and create biodiversity on the river's edge prompted Mrs Strang's idea for the Clifton Falls Walkway project, an extension of the Kakanui Community Catchment Project which did initial planting of the swimming hole five years ago which was beginning to mature now.

Mrs Strang is the project manager and said she wanted to continue this great work.

“The aim of the project is to create a two-kilometre walking track that is planted in natives to establish a wildlife corridor – to enable people to come here and utilise both the track and the river.”



The walkway track that is beginning to be established next to the Kakanui River

“The new walking track will be within reach of the water, opening up many beautiful spots to appreciate the river.”

Work has already begun on the project including clearing some of the track, but there was still plenty more work to come as 2,500 locally sourced plants ranging from harakeke to kowhai’s have been ordered to plant in the spring. Mrs Strang said the project had been divided into stages and each stage would be funded separately.

“It’s important it’s divided into sections to ensure it’s done properly.”

Stage one was the previous planting that was completed, stage two is now in process. One kilometre of track was recently cleared and

the plants will be put in the ground throughout the impending spring season. They will be planted three metres either side of the track. Stage three would involve final plantings and track extension to two kilometres to see the project through to its completion.

“Planting natives isn’t as easy as just putting a plant in the ground, they need to be watered, maintained and predator control needs to be continuous.”

The project had already received \$12,000 worth of funding from the Otago Regional Council (ORC) Eco Fund. Mrs Strang said Waitaki Irrigators Collective had been an integral support in helping put together the funding application.

Five Forks Primary School were ambassadors of the project and it was also supported by the Kakanui Irrigators Committee and the North Otago Sustainable Land Management group (NOSLAM).

“We hope to involve other groups and people and use this space for many benefits not only physical environmental space but also in education and community engagement.”

The project was a big commitment for Mrs Strang however she said allowing people to come and utilise the river and enhancing land that had previously been fenced off was the driver behind it.

“Whether people come here for swimming in the summer or get involved with planting, it brings them here and allows them to enjoy the river.”

“It also helps to better the ecosystem in the river by creating bio-diversity on the water’s edge.”

Improving water quality and having efficient water management has always been a priority for Mr and Mrs Strang, and this project fell in line with that.

The pair have been at their 440-hectare dairy farm for 15 years and have always had irrigation which



has evolved overtime, meaning water use has always been front of mind.

“We could not be sustainable without irrigation. . . water management is so important.”

This project was not the first time Mrs Strang has tried her hand at native planting in fact she had done extensive planting across their farm and was passionate about it.

“I’m in my happy place when I’m outside with my planting trailer. . . over the years I’ve learnt a lot more about

Planting next to the Kakanui River - Clifton Falls swimming hole that was done previously and is now beginning to mature.

planting through both going to courses and trial and error, it’s very rewarding to see land not going to waste and turned into a native area . . .it’s important to start somewhere and recognise that once plants are in the ground they need to be maintained in order to be successful.”

Mrs Strang has big plans for the future and hoped one day the track could go right to the coast – but that was a long term goal and in the time being needed to have plans in place to successfully complete the first stages of the project and make sure it was maintained.