

# HABITAT RESTORATION: AN ASPECT OF SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

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## Abstract

Christchurch, New Zealand was colonized by British settlers, with substantial organized migration beginning in 1850. In pre-European times the area where the city is located was swampy and the colonists made early efforts to drain the land. The present drainage system is focused on the three small urban rivers Styx, Avon and Heathcote which are spring fed and run clear and steady except when transporting storm water. The city and riparian areas have been extensively altered with introduced vegetation replacing native species and channelisation of the smaller waterways. This has had significant effects on the river ecosystems and maintenance is costly.

In the last 12 years the city authorities have developed an asset management plan which broadens the concept of urban river management beyond the purely utilitarian drainage function. A multi-valued approach to management is now applied, the values considered being: landscape, ecology, recreation, culture, heritage and drainage. Clearly costed management plans incorporating social objectives and restoration of natural values together with the traditional drainage function results in feasible, sustainable management which in the long term is likely to be cheaper. The benefits are to both people and wildlife- the native birds and the whitebait are returning!

While management of Christchurch's rivers is a miniscule issue on the world scene there are some useful general principles to be drawn from the case study.

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/upload/documents/science-and-technical/aqua9.pdf>

