

Banks Peninsula residents upset property targeted for wastewater scheme

TINA LAW

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JOHN KIRK-ANDERSON/FAIRFAX NZ

The Christchurch City Council is proposing to irrigate land with treated wastewater in either Robinsons Bay, Takamatua, or Pompeys Pillar, 9.5 kilometres east of Akaroa.

Robinsons Bay residents are concerned a property in the bay has been singled out for further scrutiny as part of Akaroa's proposed wastewater scheme.

They have asked the Christchurch City Council to investigate other potential locations to the same degree.

It is building a new \$33 million wastewater treatment plant in Akaroa and has until 2020, to find somewhere to put the treated wastewater.



JOSEPH JOHNSON/FAIRFAX NZ

Robinsons Bay residents are fighting a proposal to dump treated wastewater in the valley.

The council said the 114-hectare property at Sawmill Rd had not been targeted, but additional testing had been done since the property was offered to the council to purchase.

The same testing would be carried out at other potentially suitable sites, council three waters and waste head John Mackie said.

Plans to send wastewater into the middle of Akaroa Harbour were scuppered by Environment Canterbury, which declined the consent due to opposition from Ngai Tahu.

Three areas – Robinsons Bay, Takamatua and Pompeys Pillar, 9.5 kilometres east of Akaroa – have been highlighted as possible locations to spread treated wastewater onto pasture or kanuka trees. The proposals involve building wastewater storage ponds.

Residents in Robinsons Bay and Takamatua are fighting the proposals and some have joined a working party set up by the Banks Peninsula Community Board to work through community concerns.

Notes from a working party meeting said Robinsons Bay residents were concerned options for disposal in the bay had been developed more than other locations.

The working party requested the council put in the same amount of due diligence across all locations.

Sawmill Rd resident Chris Moore said he was "shocked and disappointed" to hear the council was considering putting wastewater ponds close to houses.

He and his wife, Annette, own a bed and breakfast and olive grove. The grove would not be affected by the scheme, but Moore said the bed and breakfast would be because people would not want to stay so close to sewage ponds.

Murray Thacker, who owns the Sawmill Rd property at the centre of the council's latest investigations, said he was happy to sell the land to the council for the scheme.

He was aware residents were upset at the prospect of the scheme in the valley, but that would not prevent him from selling, he said.

The land, which has been owned by the Thacker family since 1900, was grazed by cattle and no-one lived there.

A Beca report said the Thacker property offered several favourable features for wastewater application but further work was needed to determine the land's overall feasibility.

Mackie said the additional testing was part of due diligence to confirm whether or not the site was suitable for irrigation.

"Undertaking testing concurrently with the investigations will avoid undue time delays and related cost escalations on the project."

The council had planned to launch public consultation early this year, but delayed it until April at the community's request.

- Stuff