



**15<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

**Press Release**

**Assessing the Quality of the Catlins Environment**

As part of an effort to safeguard The Catlin's environment, Tourism Catlin's have recently worked with the community to produce assessments on the state of environment throughout the region.

Are we clean and green? These questions have been answered by the Catlin's.

Robyn Shanks, Trustee for Tourism Catlin's said: "Tourism Catlins aims to co-ordinate these assessments twice a year. Our Projects Co-ordinator collates reports from residents throughout the Catlin's, Environment Southland and Otago Regional Council."

Residents graded eight environmental factors on a scale of one to ten, one being the poorest with ten being the best. The co-operation received from residents was very good and many also provided additional information to back up their assessments.

When the resident's assessments of the environmental factors were charted and averaged over all the locations, a definite trend was apparent. A clear message was being sent. Litter free quality and human crowding levels received the poorest ratings and are therefore the most concern. Habitat diversity and air quality received the best ratings.

"The message was quite definite in the assessments, freedom camping was the main environmental concern that the residents documented. This did appear in the November 2008 assessment however not to the extent that the 2010 assessment demonstrates" said Mrs Shanks.

Tourism Catlins is a strong advocate in the management of freedom camping and is constantly working with local government and other parties to try and find a solution to this nationwide environment issue.

Updates from Environment Southland and Otago Regional Council have been received. Environment Southland will be monitoring water quality in Lake Brunton. This will track any changes in water quality overtime due to land use pressures. Recent water quality analysis has shown that the Waikawa River at Progress Valley has improved in terms of dissolved reactive phosphorus levels over the last 15 years.

Intensive monitoring from Otago Regional Council is currently being undertaken for the Catlins region. The programme hasn't finished yet, but it is clear that the water quality in the Tahakopa, Catlins and Tautuku Rivers is generally very good however some of the median levels for bacteria are slightly high. The Owaka River received a poor rating with the results clearly showing the water quality is less than good for the river. The report for the State of the Rivers in the Catlins is due out next autumn.

Tourism Catlins will be co-ordinating the annual Catlin's Cleanup which is scheduled for the 26<sup>th</sup> September in conjunction with the Keep New Zealand Beautiful week.

For more information please contact Kim Dodds, Tourism Catlins, 034158954 or Robyn Shanks 034158013