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Clutha River/Mata-au: from mountains to sea

Meandering to the ocean from its start deep in the alps, the mighty Clutha River/Mata-au has shaped our region for centuries. We want you to tell us why you love this iconic Otago river so we can protect and manage it for future generations.

Whether its calmness reflects the stunning surroundings or its raging torrent expresses its strength, the Clutha River/Mata-au demands attention.

This celebrated river has drawn us in, captivating us so much we've built communities along its banks and lake edges.

We use it for fun and relaxation, exercise, and creative inspiration. It supports industry and businesses through providing water for crops and electricity. It also supports life because we draw drinking water for humans and animals. This majestic river also brings people to Otago.

The Clutha River/Mata-au is much-loved, and we want you to take the time to step back and reflect on what this river means to you as an individual, and also to our communities

and region.

Values differ from person to person. Because of this, hearing and understanding what the Clutha River/Mata-au means to people allows us to protect it so our grandchildren and their grandchildren can continue to enjoy the river and all it has to offer.

What is it that grabs you? Is it the stunning beauty of its weather-matching moods? The recreational options it provides? How about the sustenance for your crops or animals, or the electricity it gives us? Or perhaps it's the cultural history and spiritual connections that link you to this beautiful river?

Starting last month and continuing throughout December, ORC staff are following the Clutha River/Mata-au from its pristine lakes to the Pacific Ocean to learn

what you value about the river and what it means to you and your family, to your business, and to your future.

We want to ensure the amount of water in the Clutha River/Mata-au is maintained into the future so we can continue to provide for the environmental, cultural, social, and economic needs of our communities and the wider region.

Take a journey with us and the Clutha River/Mata-au.

Check out our website at www.orc.govt.nz/clutha to be inspired by our video, and give online feedback about what you hold important about the Clutha River/Mata-au. Got questions? Contact us on 0800 474 0827 or email clutha@orc.govt.nz.

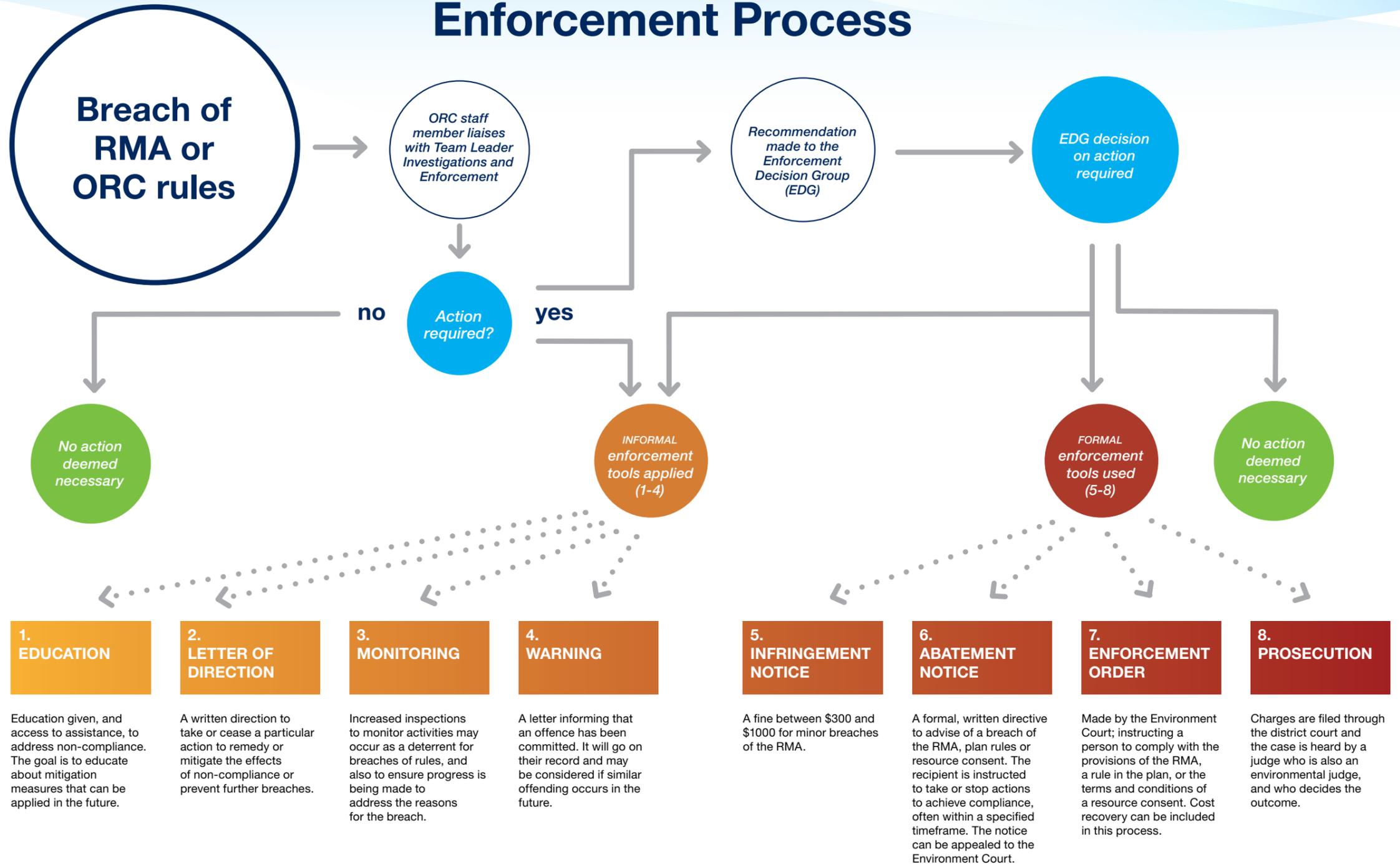
What happens when things go wrong?

Have you ever wondered what process ORC follows if enforcement action is needed? This flowchart outlines how we decide on action and what our eight enforcement tools are.

Note that this process only applies to Resource Management Act offending and different enforcement options apply to different statutes, i.e. Bylaw, the Biosecurity Act and the Building Act.

It is recognised that each case is weighted on its individual merits. No one case is the same and ORC staff recognise that each case needs to be investigated thoroughly. No decisions about the use of formal enforcement options are made in the field. The Enforcement Decision Group (EDG) includes ORC management, legal council, and the chief executive.

Enforcement Process



It seemed like a good idea at the time

Otago Regional Council is writing a new pest management plan that will help us to protect our patch. The plan will outline the pest plants and animals that have rules around how they are managed in Otago. We invited public input into the plan last month; if you missed this you'll have another chance to have your say when the plan is notified around the middle of 2018.

In the 1800s, settlers to New Zealand introduced broom so it could be planted in hedges. What was intended to be a decorative and functional plant thrived in our climate and soon became a pest plant as it invaded the landscape.

Broom is usually controlled by either digging out the bush, or cutting it down and treating the stump.

At Otago Regional Council (ORC) we've been quietly working on a project to test the effectiveness of broom gall mite, which is a tiny bug that can stunt the growth of broom, and eventually kill it.

It's a long-term approach and requires patience, but good things take time and what we've seen so far looks promising.

In late 2012 we released broom gall mites at two sites in Central Otago, and while progress started out slowly, it took off last summer.

The mite is slow to establish and needs to be spread to new sites with help from humans. We had an exciting surprise at one of our release sites, where the mite has spread out over 400 meters from the original release site, which is further than expected.

The mites themselves are tiny, but the galls (deformed lumps on the bush) are easy to spot. The mites live and feed in the galls during spring and summer, and move to new stems as the weather cools and the galls start to wither.

The mites spread on the wind, so infested plants need to be harvested to move the broom mite to new sites. The best time to do this is in early summer, and it's as easy as tying a branch with at least

50 galls on it to a healthy broom bush, then waiting for the mites to move across to the plant and start feeding on it.

Once we have enough galls at our original release sites to harvest them, we want to see how well the mite copes in wetter areas so we can eventually spread the mite to coastal areas of Otago.

The broom gall mite was brought into New Zealand by Landcare Research, and is establishing in a number of areas around the country. Thankfully the mite only likes broom, so won't damage any other plants.

Broom grows almost anywhere, and survives up to 1500 meters above sea level. It flowers in early spring with bright yellow flowers, and develops into pods by summer. It can grow up

to three metres tall and can take over native tussocks. The seeds can be viable for up to 100 years, which is why it's important to keep on top of it.

Over half of Otago (16,784 km²) has been designated as broom-free. These areas are Queenstown, Wanaka, Cromwell, and Alexandra, and land occupiers need to destroy all broom (and gorse) on their land. We hope to extend this area in our new pest management plan so we can do even more to protect our patch.

Biosecurity is not always glamorous or fast-paced, but it's an essential part of our work at ORC to keep pest plants such as broom from affecting biodiversity and taking over our beautiful landscape.



Martin King, ORC manager environmental services, and Richard Lord, ORC team leader biosecurity compliance, inspect a broom bush infected with broom gall mite.