



# Bid to clean up plant pest

Old man's beard along the Ashburton River is being attacked as part of Environment Canterbury's river engineering work.

Old man's beard was once considered a popular garden plant. Now it is recognised as an invasive, climbing and smothering pest.

Environment Canterbury pest management committee chair Cr Eugenie Sage said it probably become established in the region through the illegal dumping of garden clippings and wind-spread seed from private gardens.

"Old man's beard is well established along the Ashburton River system. The sheer volume of plant matter growing in trees threatens to collapse and kill the hosts it climbs. This can block the river and its tributaries and contribute to flooding," Cr Sage said.

Mid Canterbury ECan representative Angus McKay said community representatives on the Ashburton River Rating

Committee had supported targeted rates being used to fund the clean-up of old man's beard.

Since January this year, nearly four kilometres of riverbed has been cleared of old man's beard with work being carried out on the Tinwald side upstream from Boundary Road and above the State Highway 1 bridge, and on the north branch of the river below Shearer's crossing and downstream of Seven Bends.

"Local farmers have helped by allowing grass regrowth to create a dense sward to shade and help prevent regrowth of seedlings," Cr McKay said.

He said ECan and the Ashburton District Council were working together on old man's beard control and maintenance of the Ashburton River walkway.

People reporting sightings of old man's beard to either the regional or district council helped identify and then reduce infestations.