

Submission: Waikato Regional Council's Proposed Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora Plan Change 1 (PPC1)

Submission on a publicly notified proposed Regional Plan prepared under the Resource Management Act 1991.

Submitting On: The Waikato Regional Council's Proposed Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora Plan Change 1 (PC1)

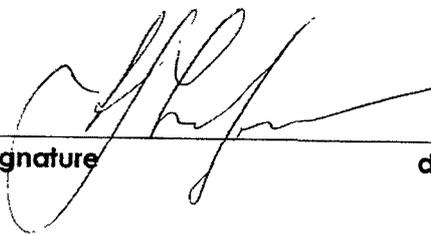
Submitting To: Waikato Regional Council
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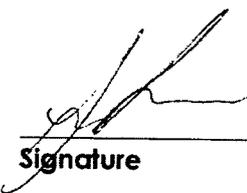
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Submission

1. I have reviewed Waikato Regional Council's Proposed Healthy Rivers/Wai Ora Plan Change 1 (PPC1) and oppose the Plan Change in its current form.
2. I wish to be heard in support of this submission.

I am not a trade competitor for the purposes of the submission but the proposed plan has a direct impact on my ability to farm. If changes sought in the plan are adopted they may impact on others but I am not in direct trade competition with them.


Signature _____ date 8/3/17 ROB LITCHFIELD


Signature _____ date 8/3/17 S a s Litchfield

3. Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Waikato Regional Council's Proposed Plan Change 1 (PPC1).

Hello my name is John Litchfield. I represent R & B Litchfield and the three generations of my family that developed our farm from the muddy swamp of Otatau in the early 1880's to the pocket of paradise we call home.

We milk up to 750 cows on our 200 ha milking platform, as well as rearing 700 head of beef stock. In the 20 years since I moved back to the family farm, I have seen massive changes in the way people think of land - what we do with it, and how we leave it when we pass it on to the next generation. Our farm has gone from thinking of environmental considerations as a cost, to thinking of them as an opportunity to be more efficient.

Do I think the rules about our water need to be changed? YES. But this needs to be done in a way that will ensure that future generations of my family are not driven off the land by poorly thought out rules that will increase the cost of food, restrict productive farming or drive productive thinkers away from our many agricultural industries.

All farmers love their environment – that's why we work outdoors and work with stock. But most media, councillors and politicians like using farming as an easy target to sway opinion. Most farmers usually need a bomb under their arses to speak out.

Councillors and politicians love to single out agriculture, as there are fewer votes involved for their political careers - rather than addressing the massive amount pollution from urban areas that is well-known but not discussed. Yes, there will pain if we are to restore the Waikato River to its best. But, the public needs to be educated about the costs and ramifications of this. Would someone from Hamilton agree to a 20% increase in rates and 10-15% increase in the cost of locally grown produce? This will happen as Hamilton's population grows and growers are restricted in land use, meanwhile there are fewer jobs, and there will be a knowledge drain as the highly educated work force finds better opportunities elsewhere. Therefore growth will stall. Yes there will be short term growth as infrastructure is upgraded, but this is only short term - meanwhile new councillors are elected and play the blame game on who came before them and we are left with the problems.

We need a plan -not a set of rules that WILL ruin what it means to be from the Waikato. We need to upgrade sewage works to a 'state of the art' standard (the technology is available); and have stormwater be filtered through wetland that could be parks. Domestic water tanks should be mandatory and grey water caught and used for watering parks, or irrigated onto farms surrounding our cities and towns. It should mandatory for farmers to do riparian planting, with the distance of planting dependent on the degree of fall.

Environmental management plans are a good idea, but need some common sense. Environmental officers should have farming experience and have practical knowledge to see if current practises are the best solution. Most farmers want to see erosion reduced on their farms, but need help; not another stick to be beaten over their heads.

Farm nitrogen leachate levels - with the current proposed rules - will punish farmers who have levels well below the average (like me) and will reward farmers who haven't invested in technology or knowledge (a poorly thought out rule). This rule also increases the value of a poorly managed farm, as their nitrogen base level would be higher than someone like me whose base is 23 kg/n/ha.

Rules about cultivation need to be justified, as we cultivate and contour paddocks in order to make less pugging damage and make less mud in our high rainfall areas.

So, Environmental Management Plans need to be tailored to fit a specific region – rather than having one plan to fit all regions. Management Boards - made up of local farmers - could act as intermediaries between council and farmers. This would be a good mix of ideology and practicality.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that I firmly believe that the rules around our water use and care need to be changed. However, these rules need to take into account ALL areas that will be affected – the environment, local economies, and peoples' livelihoods. These are all far too important to be wrapped up in ideology and not thought out practically.