

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)

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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.

- My wife and I began farming in 1982 with the purchase of a 46ha Dairy unit at Waiuku, since this time we have aspired to grow our business and purchase elite soil types that would further allow us diversity in our farming aspirations. We moved back to the Waikato and the Rotongaro district in 1990 and have further bought and sold property up to this day.
- We currently own 2 dairy units totalling 380ha with one of the dairy units sharing a common boundary with Lake Rotongaro plus a 50ha cropping block and 140ha of finishing country.
- We are in the Waikato catchment.
- Our family business employs two 50/50 sharemilkers who both have strong aspirations to own their own farms which we have encouraged.
- Eight families take direct income from our properties.
- We employ sustainable farming methods as we are fully aware of our environmental obligations limiting our N use to less than 130units per year.
- 70% of our soils are classified as elite being capable of market gardening, indeed fresh cut lettuces are grown on the boundary of our 'Lakeside dairy unit'
- We have increased our lake margin voluntarily and planted over 14,000 native trees last year with the help of the Waikato River Authority and Waikato Regional Council.

DO NOT SUPPORT

Rule 3.11.5.3 Permitted Activity – Farming activities with a Farm Environment Plan under a Certified Industry Scheme.

Overall= Support part of rule 3.11.5.3

DO SUPPORT

- Stock being excluded from waterways where this is practical, I can see that sheep farmers on steeper land running a low intensity system would have minimal effect on the environment plus the cost to fence off all water sources and introduce an alternative would be prohibitive.
- Farm Environment Plans but worry that the skills of the person developing these plans will have a direct bearing on our potential farm income and future viability.

DO NOT SUPPORT

- Nitrogen Reference Point (NRP)

Why

- The 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 seasons where low payout years when farmers where struggling with cash flows to even break even, this had a direct impact on what we spent on fertilizer and other farm inputs and hence was not representative of an average season. Indeed, some farmers even reduced cow numbers to minimise their expenses. Surely this is not a fair representation of a normal farming season.
- Overseer was never designed as a regulatory tool.

ALTERNATIVES

- It would seem to make more sense to have a NRP over 5 seasons if we need one at all, I would prefer to use the Farm Environment Plan to cover all farming activities taking into account soil types and best use of land for that particular sub zone.

Rule 3.11.5.7 Non complying activity -Land use change.

Overall-Do not support Land use change

Why

- This rule will have a major impact on land values and the transfer of wealth with elite soils not realising their full potential for the individual owner or the community as a whole with respect to future earnings potential and distribution of income.
- This rule shows no discretion between soil types only current farming baseline activities.
- Will limit the ability for individual farmers to grow their business by diversifying into market gardening or other high yielding crops.
- Part of our best farming practice includes a cropping and re-grassing program which allows us to improve our grass species and hence our cash flow.
- My neighbour farms an intensive finishing unit on elite soils with this plan change it takes away his choice and freedom to farm as he chooses, is this fair, as now he sees his potential land devalue overnight. This rule effectively takes away our property rights.

Alternatives

- Council should look at breaking areas on a sub-catchment basis, taking into account the soil types and best use of land in those areas while working together with farmers.
- Identify the most critical areas and deal with them first.
- Koi Carp and Canadian Geese are having a huge effect on the landscape and environment that we farm in, as stated we share an extensive frontage with Lake Rotongaro. As a child my wife witnessed first-hand being able to see eels swimming in the lake, this was some 50 years ago before these were introduced by coarse fish man and the Geese by fish and game. I am unsure of the solution to eradicate these pests but I feel it is worth noting that they do play a major part in the point loading of nutrients in the lake and surrounding farm land.
- Allow farmers to continue the practice of re-grassing a maximum of 10% of the total farm area using good farming practice programs, if this is not allowed to continue then productivity and cash flow will be negatively affected.