

Mark Verry

522 Haku Rd

Piopio

Our family own and operate a 700 ha hill country sheep and beef farm at the above address and have done so since 1906.

Here are some noteworthy events. In 2002 we won a Regional Council Farm Environment Award for Energy Efficiency. In recent years we have fenced and planted native trees on several areas of cliff tops and put these areas in to Q. E. Trust. We have fenced and native planted 2 ha of river margins.

I consider the Healthy Rivers Plan to be a knee jerk reaction to ongoing propaganda of a shrill and hysterical nature by various anti livestock farming organisations who would love nothing better than to see the farming industry brought to it's knees. In the process, what would then happen to the wider rural community [including the rates gathering Regional Council] that depends on it, and indeed, the country as a whole.

The Plan as it stands is a terrible example of box ticking, one size fits all remedy that is not going to achieve its aims.

Let us be clear that we do not farm in the Waipa Waikato Rivers catchment but with the unholy mess that Council is proposing to foist on that area, I do not trust Council to come up with anything practical or useful when it's the turn of West Coast catchment to be "saved", and I am not going to allow Council to get away with divide and rule tactics.

Of course it would also be good to see some worthwhile plans put in place to alleviate the pollution from our cities into waterways. The ongoing sewerage discharges, the deposit of heavy metal pollutants that prevent even collecting drinking water from city roofs, the car washing detergents that get washed down the waterways, point source industrial discharges etc.

As for the specific plans Council has in store for farmers, let us be clear that farmers want clean waterways as much as anyone else. But it needs to be remedied at a sub catchment level so actual problems can be identified and real solutions found without resorting to mindless broadbrush bureaucracy. For instance I understand that the Waikato R has a nitrogen problem and the Waipa R has a sediment problem so why on earth would anybody of sound mind make up convoluted rules to cover both at the same time? And while talking about Waipa R sediment, Why is Council not completing the job of removing old willows that are interfering with the natural flow of the river? And in trying to return rivers to their condition of 1863 let it be acknowledged that the missionaries recorded at that time that the Waipa R ran dirtier than the Waikato R at their confluence. The simple reason being that the Waipa could be described as an "upside down river" with muddier banks than the Waikato.

Through the generations our family has always taken a good stewardship approach to farming our property, both for the protection of the environment and for the philosophy of sustainable farming within the physical limits of the land that we have. This includes all grass farming in the absence of

winter crops and yet now it seems that Council would trap us in a time warp, that would say any future technology that could change that, would not be allowed because it might raise the NRP from extremely low to very low. Is that our reward for 110 years of exemplary environmental stewardship?

As for the fencing of all permanent waterways, there may be a case to be made for some waterways to be fenced on a case by case basis where a clear need is identified, just as a case could be made for public monies to be forwarded to spread the cost over the whole community that is clamouring for it to happen. The checks on that funding would ensure that only the necessary waterways were fenced to obvious advantage rather than this draconian "farmers will pay all to fence all waterways". Such a notion is counter productive both for farming and for the environment. Common sense and good stockmanship as opposed to university training [and I have done both] long ago concluded that on hill country, fences belong on ridges. The notion of fencing all permanent waterways is impractical and only designed to make hill country farming unworkable.

The Government's new freshwater guidelines makes some far more sensible points than this mess that Council would foist upon us and surely shows that environmental gains could be made with more bipartisan agreement than this mess will ever do. If Council wasn't in such a hurry to hog the headlines they [and us, the ratepayers] would be a whole lot better off. To the tune of 40 something million dollars and counting.

So if you are looking for an understated report card from one of your financiers, then the message is: "Could do a hell of a lot better".

N B I want to be able to speak to the hearing.