

PROPOSED WAIKATO REGIONAL PLAN CHANGE 1 WAIKATO AND WAIPĀ RIVER CATCHMENTS



Submission form on publicly notified – Proposed
Waikato Regional Plan Change 1 – Waikato and
Waipā River Catchments.

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FORM 5 Clause 6 of First Schedule, Resource Management Act 1991

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SUBMISSIONS CAN BE

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Delivered to	Waikato Regional Council, 401 Grey Street, Hamilton East, Hamilton
Faxed to	(07) 859 0998 <i>Please Note: if you fax your submission, please post or deliver a copy to one of the above addresses</i>
Emailed to	healthyrivers@waikatoregion.govt.nz <i>Please Note: Submissions received by email must contain full contact details.</i>
Online at	www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/healthyrivers

We need to receive your submission by 5pm, 8 March 2017.

YOUR NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS

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Full name: _____
 Address for service of person making submission: _____
As above.
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TRADE COMPETITION AND ADVERSE EFFECTS (select appropriate)

I could / could not gain an advantage in trade competition through this submission. **I am a dairy farmer with a boundary on the Mangatawhiri river.**

I am / am not directly affected by an effect of the subject matter of the submission that:

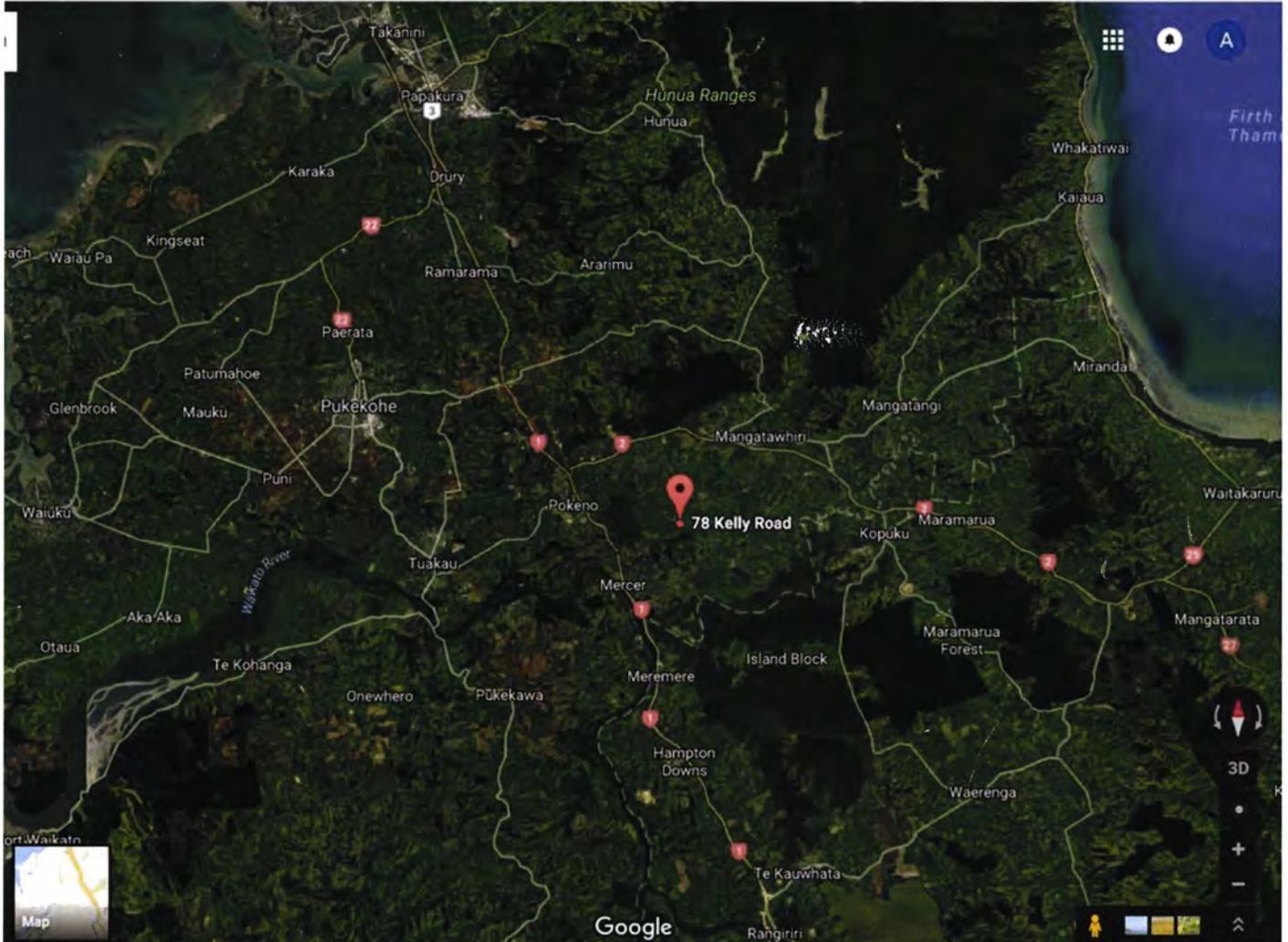
(a) adversely effects the environment, and
 (b) does not relate to the trade competition or the effects of trade competition.

Delete entire paragraph if you could not gain an advantage in trade competition through this submission

"I wish to speak at a Council hearing"

M Dean

Submission on the Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1 Waikato and Waipa River Catchment



Prepared by Matthew Dean.

This submission are his personal views and do not necessarily represent the views of organisations or committees he belongs to.

Submission

Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1 Waikato and Waipa River Catchments.

Introduction

I would like to begin by thanking all those who have made such a huge effort formulating and communicating this plan and in the process making myself and the majority of the Waikato farming community more aware of the need to keep working on improving water quality in the region.

The things I like about the plan are:

- 1) The need to register information relevant to environmental issues with council for all but the very smallest and lowest intensity farms.
- 2) The need for farm environment plans.
- 3) The provision for farmers to join certified industry schemes.
- 4) The need to fence rivers and streams to keep livestock, with the exception of sheep, away from lakes, rivers and streams, **where it is possible without ridiculous expense.**
- 5) The accreditation system to ensure only people who know what they are talking about are working with farmers on environmental compliance.

The main problem is with the way the plan has been developed and will evolve in the future which stems from the age old problem with democracy. This is that it is human nature to want as much of something (degree of water purity improvement) as one can get, so long as someone else appears to be paying. This will result in uncertainty over the long term future prosperity of farming in the region.

The specific things I don't like about the plan are:

- 1) The bureaucracy that will be created to run the plan, process and police changes of land use resource consents. It is important for Waikato Regional Council not to put itself in the position of micro managing farms. Farmers have to be able to make quick decisions based on market demand particularly during the crop planting season. If they cannot, the Waikato Regional Council could become very unpopular even to the extent of some farmers seeking compensation for damages, if council staff are negligent in carrying out their duties.

My submission is that considerable farm enterprise flexibility has to be a feature of Farm Environment Plans. I would like to see more emphasis on farmer education relating to environmental issues.

Refer 3.11.5.1 Page 39 to 3.11.5.7 Page 45

2) Stock exclusion from streams on steep hill country

As a dairy farmer with a relatively flat farm, I can see that the Healthy Rivers Plan for Change is going to cause huge problems for some hill country farmers who are required to fence off streams in the numerous steep gullies that may traverse their properties. This measure could cause some farms to become uneconomic and some farmers to have to walk off their land. I think it would be wrong for the Healthy Rivers Plan for Change to cause economic hardship. These farmers have to have a Farm Environment Plan with mitigations that enable them to still farm profitably "one cannot be green if one is in the red". The Farm Environment Plan could stipulate sheep farming without cattle so as to avoid the need for fencing and the provision of artificial water supply on difficult blocks. This decision could be incentivised by, a carbon credit based government sponsored programme to replant steep hill country back into slow growing native hardwoods such as Totara, Rimu, Kauri etc. This suggested programme should not disrupt New Zealand's international trade as everybody knows that planting these hardwoods is good for the long term health of the planet, but is not a financially viable farming enterprise without carbon credits.

My submission is that Waikato Regional Council should start putting pressure on Government to make carbon credits a financially viable option for farmers to plant slow growing native hardwoods.

Refer 3.11.1.1 Page 22 to 3.11.4.12 Page 38

3) Politicised Collaborative Stakeholders Group and Governance

As a farmer, the governance of the Healthy Rivers Plan for Change and the makeup of the Collaborative Stakeholder Group (C.S.G) appears to be highly politicised with insufficient participants with any empathy for farmers. However I acknowledge the position we farmers are in and hope that the points I raise demonstrate my genuine desire to arrive at a good outcome both for improving water quality and the future of farming in this region.

My submission in 4) covers this issue.

4) The creation of uncertainty about the future of farming

Farmers like ourselves have invested heavily over the last five years to bring our farming environmental standards up to best practice, but get no recognition for it in the city media, and with our belief that control of the plan is highly politicised, we do not have confidence that future changes to the plan won't result in the farming industry always having unattainable and unreasonable environmental and economic challenges to overcome. There is a great danger that this is likely to result in the impoverishment of farmers and the rural servicing towns in the same way that the establishment of the "Base" resulted in the impoverishment of the central business district of Hamilton. Farming, farm employment and rural servicing are not easy lifestyles as is evidenced by the fact that the average age of farmers in both New Zealand and Australia is increasing as the children from farming families that have seen the life that their parents have lived, choose city careers and employment rather than supporting their parents and eventually taking over the traditional family farm. This trend is not limited to New

Zealand and Australia. Worldwide 1.3 million people a week migrate from rural areas and work to urban centres in search of a better life.

Page 20

3.11.1

Vision and Strategy

I propose that the vision and strategy be amended to read:

“Our vision is for a future where a healthy Waikato River sustains abundant life and equally prosperous communities both rural and urban who, in turn, are all responsible for restoring and protecting the health and wellbeing of the Waikato River, and all it embraces, for generations to come.”

Page 27 – Objective 4

I propose the addition of a third item (c).

My submission is that:

(c) The policies followed to achieve objective 1 and the pace at which that objective will be pursued will be restrained by the affordability of the options available to farmers and the necessity to maintain rural prosperity equivalence with the major N.Z. urban centres, so as not to depopulate the countryside and small rural service towns or exacerbate the migration of rural people to urban centres in search of a better life.

5) Flexibility for young farmers with land use change designated as Non-Complying.

It is noted that provision is made in the objectives and policies, for some flexibility with non-complying activities for the development of tangata whenua ancestral lands, land use change. Farm Environment Plans and mitigation stipulations for enthusiastic young farmers getting into their first rundown farm should not be so harsh that New Zealand farming loses its vitality and gets locked into an old fashioned time warp operated by old people. This is the situation in Japan and we do not want that here.

In this submission I propose that the same flexibility and supportive approach extended to tangata whenua in chapter 3.11 also be extended to enthusiastic young farmers with environmental as well as traditional farming training and experience to take over and revamp rundown farms or blocks of land that are fit for the purpose of intensification or the proposed change of land use.

6) Flexibility in dealing with “significant subcatchments”

My submission is that:

The Healthy Rivers Plan for change should have flexibility in what programmes are required of farmers in different catchment types. Eg drainage districts vs hill country.

This is because some catchments may require stricter mitigations than others. For example the Mangatawhiri River has an Auckland water supply dam in its headwaters, flows through the Hunua Ranges for more than twenty kilometres before reaching farmland. Once it exits the native forests of the Hunua ranges it passes through approximately 10 farms in excess of 20 hectares before reaching the Waikato River. The farmers in the catchment of the Mangatawhiri River care greatly for their river and

with the co-ordinating help of a consulting officer from the Waikato Regional Council, I am sure would gladly take up the opportunity to band together as a group to come up with their own ideas as to what would be required to achieve water quality improvements in excess of those presently thought attainable. Not only that but we have valuable local knowledge and getting our enthusiastic co-operation would result in a far better outcome than policing from above.

To illustrate the point I would like to draw attention to the fact that the Mangatawhiri River looks yellow and unswimmable at the State Highway 1 bridge just north of Mercer. However 7 kilometres upstream the river water is relatively clear and swimmable as it passes through the Dean and Welch family farms. **See photographs.** Almost all farmers bordering the Mangatawhiri River have invested heavily in bridges, weeping walls, large effluent storage ponds spray irrigation, tree planting and stream fencing. **See photographs.** I don't believe that the changes to the rivers swimability over such a short distance this summer and after such a long period without rain, could be caused by dairy farming runoff, when the vast majority of the local dairy farms are in sealed off drainage districts with pumps that were switched off from early December 2016 to mid-February 2017. I believe that other factors are the cause such as change in river bed composition from gravel to silt in the lower reaches of the river which makes for an ideal habitat for Japanese Koi carp that number thousands in the lower reaches of the river. **See photographs.** Also stagnating water, caused by insufficient water release from the Mangatawhiri Dam over dry summers, invasive fresh water weeds of European origin such as the "oxygen" weed used in gold fish tanks and Canadian geese bodily wastes all add their contribution.

If water quality is to be significantly improved in the Waikato River catchment, the causes of poor water quality need to be correctly identified and this requires investigation. The Mangatawhiri River would be an ideal catchment to undertake initial investigations into these matters. The issues are not as simple as the city media makes out and there is not just one culprit. Also it is nonsensical to ask farmers to suffer business damaging bureaucracy, and incur unnecessary expenditure if the most improvement to water quality can be achieved by dealing effectively with pests and the impact of an Auckland water supply dam.

I am of the view that Japanese Koi carp and stagnating water are the number 1 and number 2 impediments to summer swimmability in the lower reaches of the Mangatawhiri River and I am sure NZ scientists can work out a way to eliminate that pest fish such as say by introducing sterile male fish into the population. The Japanese Koi carp is the opossum of many lakes, rivers and streams in the lower Waikato. What would be the point of enforcing disruptive fencing setback rules when say Japanese Koi Carp are a far bigger menace.

My submission on this pertains to the cultivation and fencing setbacks outlined next.

7) Exemption from the 5m cultivation rule for Lower Waikato Drainage Districts.

A very important issue for farmers in drainage districts, of which there are over 100 in the lower Waikato, is the stipulation that no cultivation can take place closer than 5m from drains that hold water all year around. In most pumped drainage districts the majority of drains can hold water all year around but often have no flow for over 6 months of the year. This is an important consideration when managing peat over summer. Many of these drainage districts still have layers of stumps and timber

underground and these need to be removed every so often by digger or stumpchipper right up to the edge of the drain. If a farmer is only allowed to cultivate to within 5m of the drain, with the passage of time, the drains will eventually become walled off from the centre of the paddock which will then become excessively wet and require another drain to be built. This 5m cultivation rule is not a practical rule for most drainage districts.

My submission is that:

Page 40 e.i

Farmers in drainage districts are exempted from the 5m cultivation setback rule.

8) A reduced general fencing setback for drainage districts.

The plan recommends a 3m and a 1m fencing setback from drains under various non-cultivation scenarios. Both these setbacks will cause problems in drainage districts.

In drainage districts many farm races were constructed by digging drains on both sides of where a race was intended to be and the drain cleanings formed the race. Often these races were built too narrow in the first place. Both a 3m and a 1m setback will cause difficulty with farm machinery and livestock movement on races for some farmers. With drains on both sides of the race changing anything will prove very expensive and disruptive.

In the field both the 3m and 1m fencing setbacks will cause weed problems that can be easily managed if cows can reach under a wire and graze right up to the edge of a drain. Cows are 2 ½ m long so any bodily fluids deposited while grazing under the wire will fall at least 2 ½ meters out from the edge of the drain.

Refer Page 40

4 e.2 and Page 50 Schedule C.2

My submission is that:

A ½ m setback be uniformly applied in all fencing setback situations within drainage districts.

Matthew Dean

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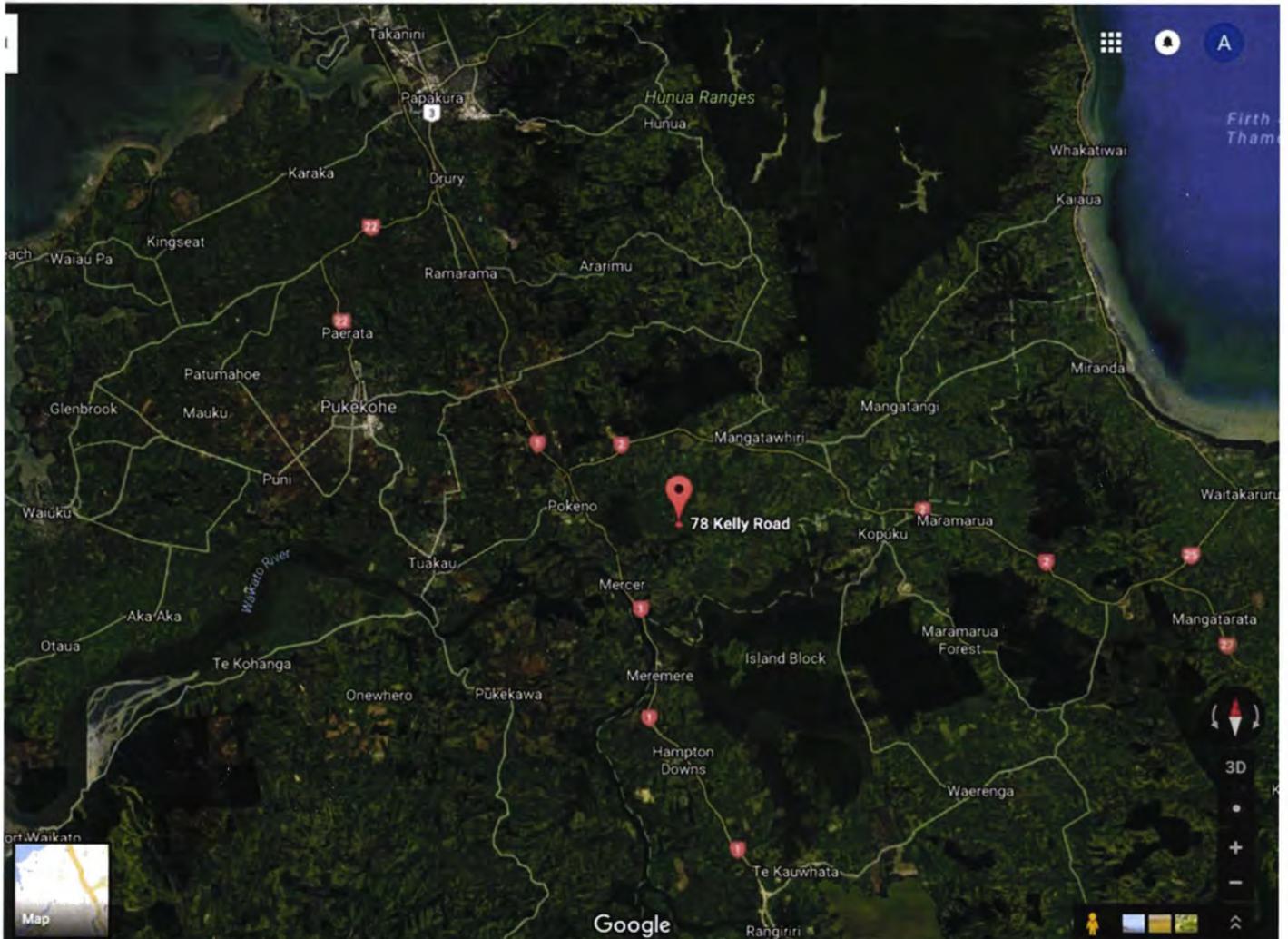
silverdene@xtra.co.nz

027 2936549

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I would like the opportunity to present my submission in person at a council hearing.

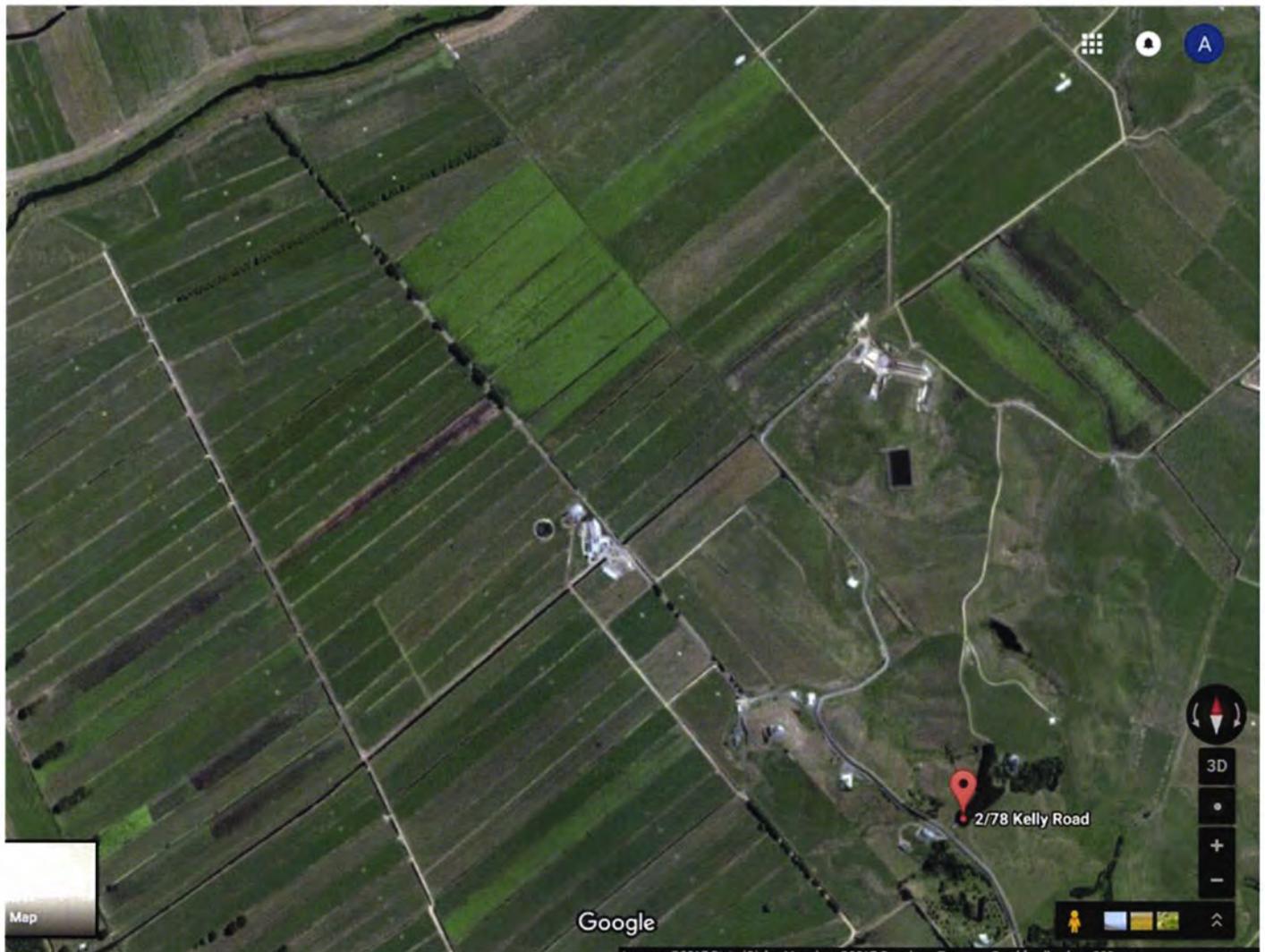
Mangatawhiri River Catchment Regional Overview



My family farm is at
78 Kelly Road

A large proportion of the farming in the Mangatawhiri Valley is done in the Mangatawhiri Drainage District.

Close up view of the drainage network in Compartment 3 Mangatawhiri Drainage District



An issue for the farmers in the Mangatawhiri Drainage District is that with this network of drains, the 5m no cultivation rule is going to prove very problematic both in terms of land loss and dealing with stumps.

Also many farm races have drains on both sides and numerous culverts. The job of preventing winter water runoff into drains will be very expensive, almost impossible. Also inflexible application of the one meter and three meter fence setback rules would shut down many of these races. Half a meter fencing setback would be better for all situations.

Some land in the Mangatawhiri Drainage District, needs to be stumpchipped and cultivated right up to the edge of drains every 6-8 years.



The following two photographs illustrate present practices.

Land that has been stumpchipped and put into Maize



Land that has been stumpchipped and put into Chickory



In the last 5 years farmers in the Mangatawhiri Drainage District have invested a lot of money to reduce ecoli and nutrient contamination to make their river swimmable. There is scope to do more but a lot has been achieved.

Photographs illustrating some of the investment made by the farmers in the Mangatawhiri drainage district to improve water quality.



Cockrell Family

Note very large above ground effluent storage tank in background.



Welch Family



Fencing and gully/wetland planting



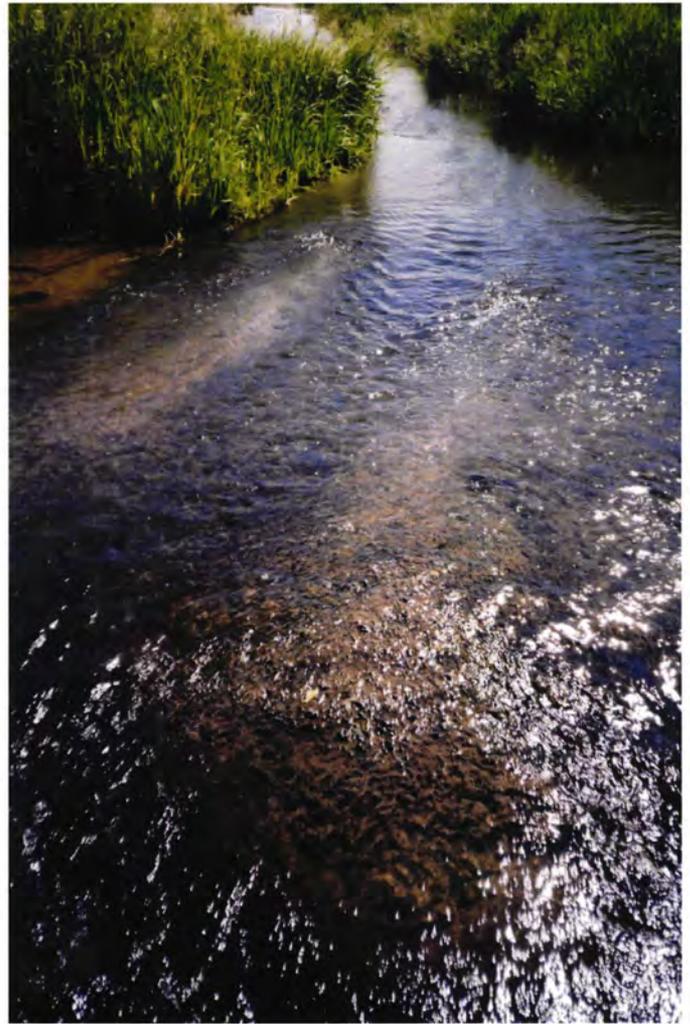
Bridge investment McIlroy family



The wide span makes this bridge expensive

In spite of these investments even in summer, the river still looks bad in the eye of the public. This river is very much in the public eye because it is on the Te Araroa walkway.

In summer the public walking the Te Araroa trail see clear swimmable water , 200m below the State Highway 2 bridge.

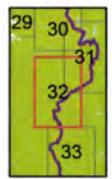
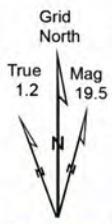
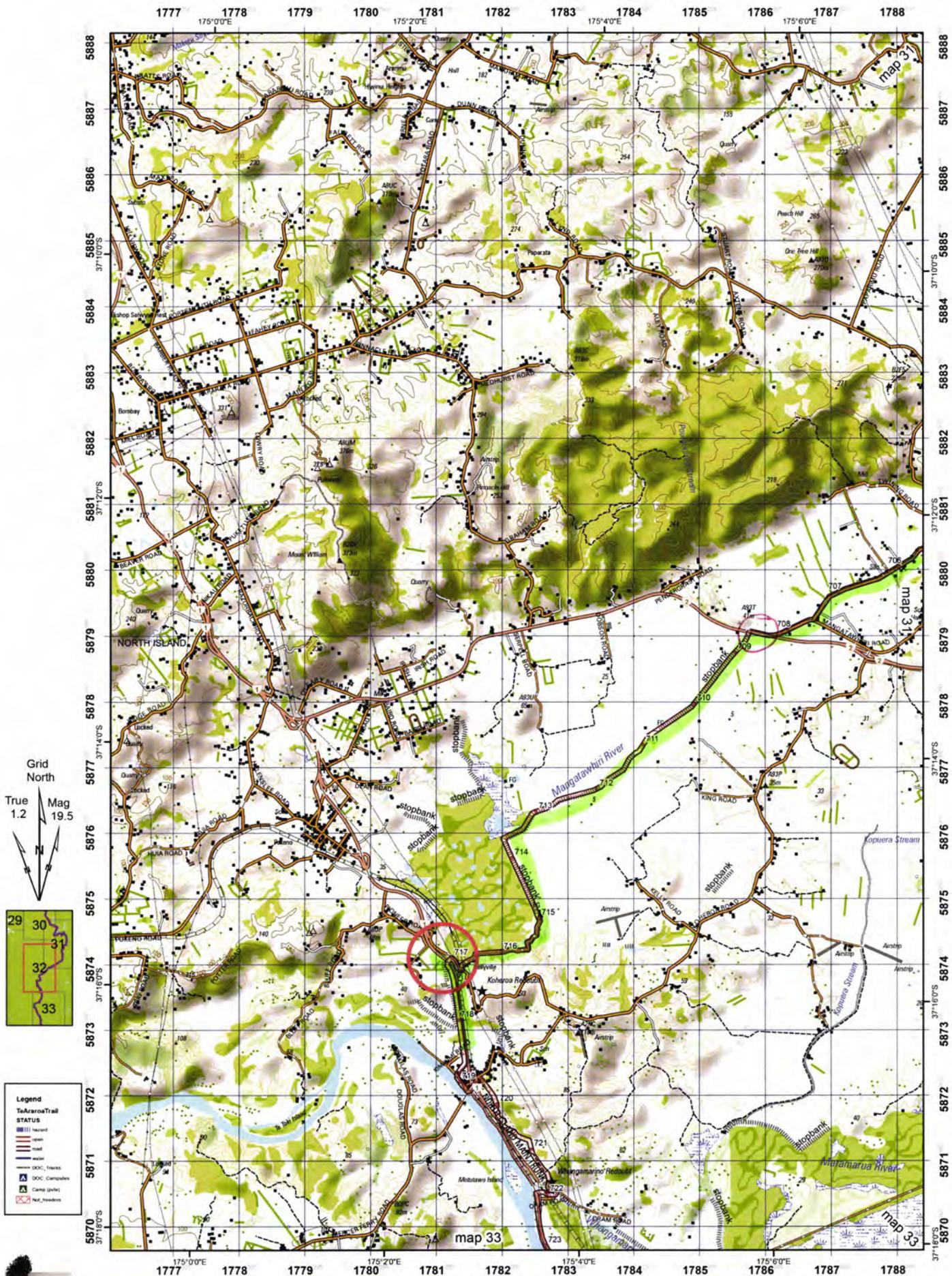


Then they see brown unswimmable water at the Old State Highway 1 bridge just north of Mercer. Only approximately 7km separates these two photographs. Taken on the same day in January 2017 , with no rain for weeks beforehand to cause runoff from dairy farms. The public don't know that however and blame farmers.



This ugly eyesaw is a national historic place. It is the location General Cameron's army crossed the Mangatawhiri river in 1863 and by doing so started the Waikato War with Tainui.

The two circles on the next page mark where the Te Araroa walkway intersects with the State highway 2 and State highway 1 bridges over the Mangatawhiri river and passes through the middle of the Mangatawhiri Drainage District.



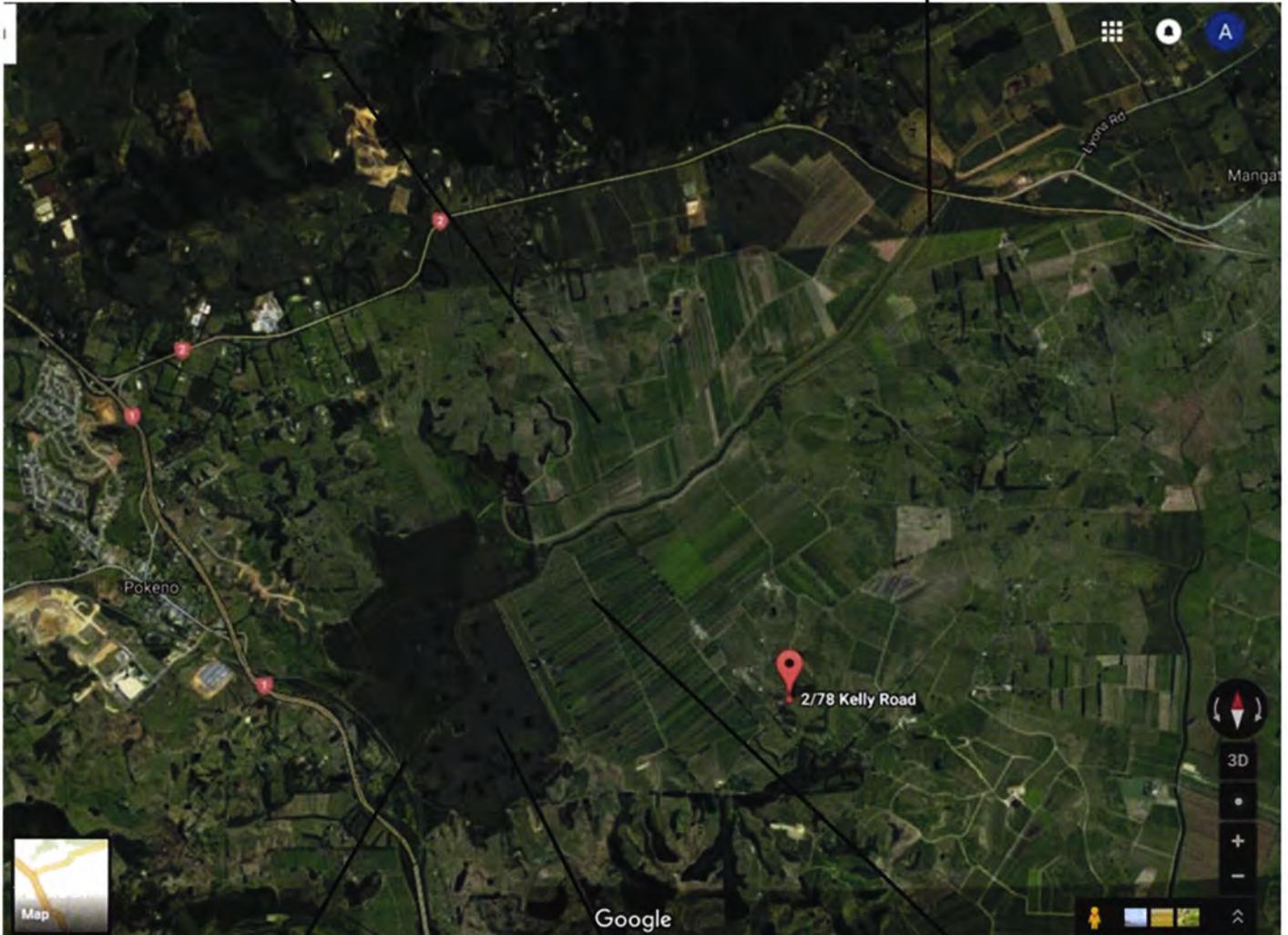
- Legend**
- Te Araroa Trail STATUS
 - road
 - water
 - DOC tracks
 - DOC Campsites
 - Camp (public)
 - Not traversed



Aerial photographs showing the landscape and points of interest between the two circles on the Te Araroa map.

Farmland Mangatawhiri
Drainage District
Compartment 4

Location of photograph taken of clear
swimmable water, Mangatawhiri River,
200m below State Highway 2 bridge
bordering Dean and Welch family farms.



Location of photograph taken
of brown unswimmable
water at Old State Highway 1
bridge just north of Mercer.

Modified wetland
owned by
Fish and Game

Farmland Mangatawhiri
Drainage District
Compartment 3.

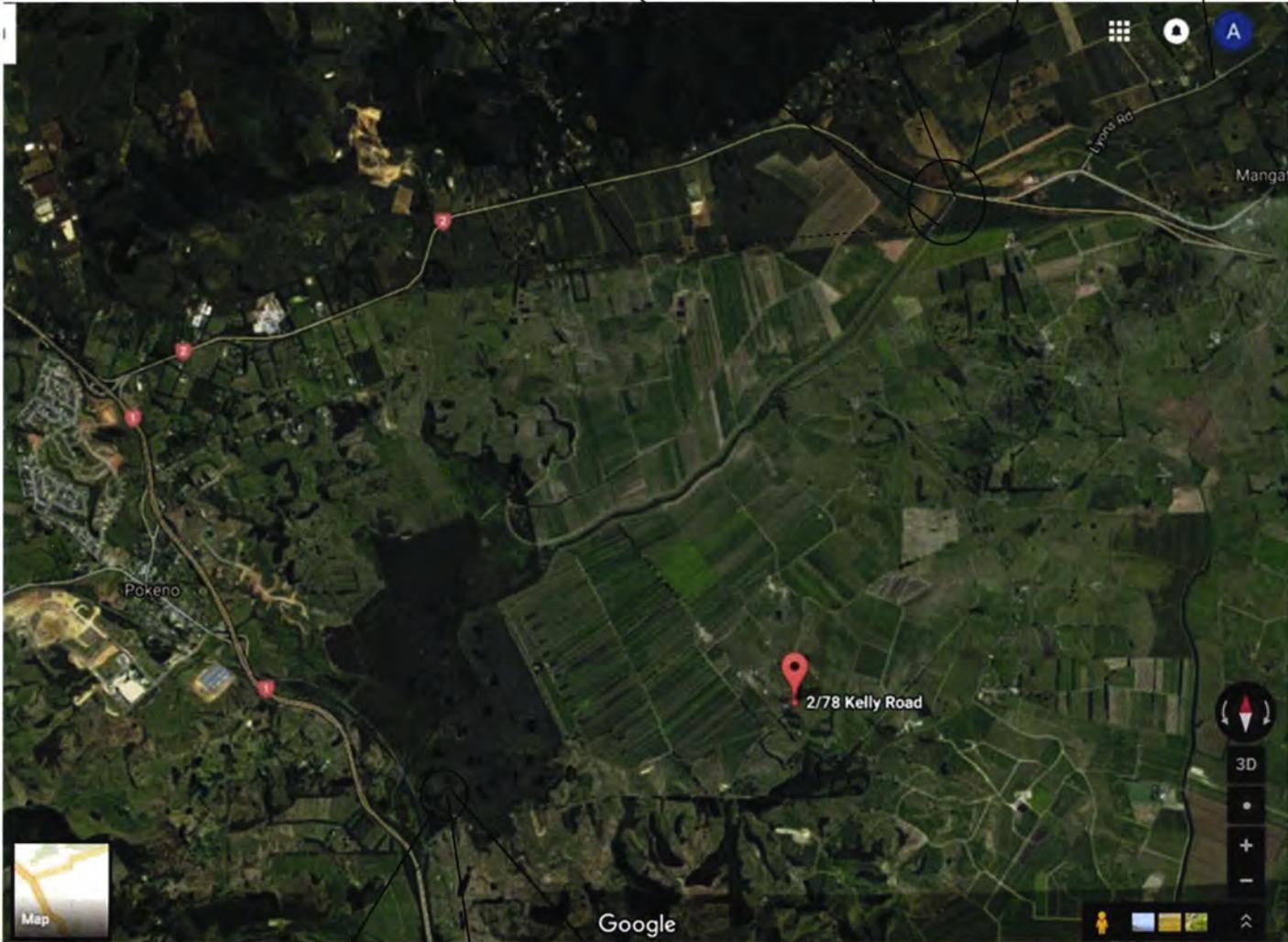
Approximation of proposed State Highway 2 road realignment

The area between the old bridge and the new bridge could be developed as a park and fresh water swimming facility for use over the hot summer months. There will be plenty of car parking available once the bypass is completed.

New Bridge

Old Bridge

Te Araroa Walkway



Te Araroa Walkway

This is the location that General Cameron's army crossed the Mangatawhiri river in 1863 and by doing so started the Waikato War with Tainui.

This site could and should be developed as a beautiful park with a fresh water swimming facility for use over the hot summer months. There is plenty of room for car parking.

The farmers bordering the river cannot contaminate the river over summer when there is no rain because without rain there is no runoff. Also the farms are walled off from the river by the stopbanks of their drainage districts. If there is no rain, the drainage districts pumps do not switch on.



What is the explanation?

Could it be the change of river bed from pebbles to silt and mud?

Could it be Japanese Koi carp making the most of this and disturbing the mud?

Could it be insufficient water released from the Mangatawhiri Dam in the Hunua ranges over summer causing the lower reaches of the Mangatawhiri river to become stagnant?

Could it be introduced European river weed making the above situation worse by slowing down water flow?

Could it be Canadian Geese and other water fowl contaminating the river water with their ecoli and bodily waste?

Could it be all of the above and more?

This is worthy of investigation.

Plume of silt from Japanese Koi carp disturbing an otherwise clear stream, a tributary of the Mangatawhiri river, in their search for food.



Japanese Koi carp working the silt for food. They are a waterway pest just like the opossum is a forest pest.



Also showing “oxygen weed” that was introduced to NZ in gold fish tanks, but is now also choking up the Mangatawhiri River and its tributaries.

Same waterway just 1 kilometre upstream where there are no Japanese Koi carp or “oxygen” weed.



Japanese Koi carp silting up an area behind the Compartment 2 pump station. This is on the river side of the pumps. The pump had not turned on for at least 6 weeks. The river adjacent to this ponding area is clear.



Japanese Koi carp

The interface between the Mangatawhiri river and the Japanese Koi carp habitat behind the Compartment 2 pump station.



The clear water of the Mangatawhiri river adjacent to the Japanese koi carp habitat at the Compartment 2 pump station.



The Mangatawhiri River prior to its arrival at the Mangatawhiri Drainage District has a massive Auckland water supply dam located at its headwaters in the Hunua ranges.



Aerial view of the Mangatawhiri Dam



Over summer Auckland “Watercare” takes so much water out of the Mangatawhiri River for the Auckland water supply that only a trickle is released to keep the river healthy further down.

Photo taken 26 Feb 2017



The flow is
1m wide
max.

100mm.
Average
Depth
max.

Note the size of the water main taking Mangatawhiri river water to Auckland.



Conclusion

Because the Mangatawhiri river is a place of national importance at the old state highway 1 bridge just north of Mercer and because the Mangatawhiri river is also on the Te Araroa walking trail and at the doorstep of Auckland, I believe it should be a top priority river for cleaning up with the creation of public swimming facilities for use over summer at **suitable locations**. For most of its length the Mangatawhiri river is in native bush. Only approximately 10 farms greater than 20 hectares boundary onto it and most of those farms have made considerable investments to improve water quality.

If a solution could be found to the Japanese Koi carp problem, and Auckland "Watercare" could be persuaded to cooperate with water release, the Mangatawhiri river water quality could be further improved even made swimmable without huge expense, and the knowledge gained in the process would have applicability right throughout the Waikato and Waipa catchments.

Cleanup of the Mangatawhiri River and the creation of public swimming areas would cost several millions of dollars not tens of million of dollars like other more controversial projects being contemplated and so is considered good value for money. In addition it would demonstrate to the public that they have been listened to, at a location easily observed and very close to Auckland, while at the same time help Aucklanders to understand that water quality improvement is not just a matter for farmers to deal with.

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Waikato River Scene

Hot summers day in January 2017. There were lots of people in the background, swimming in front of the Mercer Rowing Club, even though they are hard to see.

A very popular swimming facility with Mercer locals.

