

**BEFORE THE**

Waikato Regional Council

**IN THE MATTER OF**

Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Plan

Change 1 and Variation 1A

**STATEMENT OF**

John Athelstone Crichton and Glenda Ann Crichton

Submission # 73065

Date: 27 May 2019

Contact for service:

Name: John Crichton or Ann Crichton

Phone: (07) 8722816

Email: crichtonjag@gmail.com

**STATEMENT OF** John Athelstone Crichton and Glenda Ann Crichton

**Scope of statement**

1. This statement:
  - a. Introduces our farming business, and the ways that we farm to the natural capability of our property.
  - b. Outlines which parts of the proposed Plan will make it difficult to continue delivering these on-farm gains;
  - c. Specifically, we will focus on:
    - (I) Restricting land use change. Rule 3.11.5.7 – Non Complying Activity Rule - Land Use Change
    - (II) Nitrogen Reference Points. Subsets of rules 3.11.5.2 through 3.11.5.7
    - (111) Farm Environmental Plans. Subsets of rules 3.11.5.3 through 3.11.5.7
    - (1V) Stock Exclusions. Subsets of rules 3.11.5.1 through 3.11.5.4
  - d. Outlines alternative ways to better the Plan's objectives; and
  - e. Outlines our future vision for the farm.

# HEARING STATEMENT TO THE WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL, PLAN CHANGE 1

Submission # 73065

Good afternoon Everyone,

1. We are John and Ann Crichton – semi retired sheep and beef farmers with a now down sized unit of 61 hectares at Wharepuhunga, Otorohanga District. It has rolling contour with some steeper hillsides.
2. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to our submission.
3. We are proud to own a beautiful, tidy farm with the Puniu River running through it. John's family bought this farm nearly 60 years ago with a Returned Serviceman's Rehabilitation Loan after World War II. After having lived on a farm all his life, John left school to help his father on the family farm. Unfortunately his dad died unexpectedly just a few months later. John was left to run the farm from the tender age of 16. At age 21 he bought the farm with a 100% mortgage. We got married the following year. Times were tough, every cent went back into the farm for many years. We are now a 50 / 50 partnership and I have always helped on the farm.
4. We have 2 adult children who helped on the farm when they were at school and at university. Even now they still help with tasks such as docking. Our grandson loves helping too – he is the 4<sup>th</sup> generation to enjoy this land. John is now 70 so we have downsized to take life a little easier.
5. We try to farm sustainably and to the environmental capability of the land.
6. We have Mairoa Ash soil with some rocky areas and also some tomos in places. We have made some of the steeper paddocks sloping down to the river, sheep only.
7. We had fenced off parts of the river and bush areas from cattle when we had our larger farm.
8. Over the last 50 years we have planted a lot of trees.

**Specific parts of the plan that we commenting on;**

## **RESTRICTING LAND USE CHANGE**

### **9. We oppose Policy 6 Restricting Land Use Change.**

10. As sheep and beef farmers, we do minimal damage to the environment.
11. We need to be able to diversify for resilience in a changing world market. As with all forms of business, we need to be able to meet this market. Restricting land use does not allow us to do this.
12. Effectively, this causes us loss of capital. We can't realise the value of our land as it can no longer be converted to dairying. Our retirement funds have been reduced by about 25% because of this.
13. For many years we have been paying higher rates as our land was considered suitable for dairying.
14. Restricting Land Use Change benefits those who already do the most damage to the environment.
15. High intensity activities are allowed to continue, whilst low intensity activities, such as ours, are unfairly penalised.

### **16. We propose that this provision be deleted entirely.**

17. Water pollution needs to be addressed by the entire population, not just farmers.

## NITROGEN REFERENCE POINTS

### We oppose Nitrogen Reference Points

18. This clause benefits existing high nitrogen producers. Whilst the top 25% of nitrogen polluters are required to bring levels down to the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile, existing low producers are not allowed to increase by even a small amount.

19. We do no cultivation, and as sheep and beef farmers we have an indicative NRP of 20.

20. When we downsized, we also decreased our stocking rate. Under this clause, we can not even take it back to our previous level.

21. This severely affects our options when we retire and sell our property.

22. How can farmers reach the NZ Government's target to double agricultural production by the year 2025 if we are to lessen nitrogen usage?

23. **We seek that this provision be amended.**

24. To be fair, nitrogen allowances should be based on land size, not current land use. This way all farmers will have the same nitrogen allowance per hectare.

25. These initial nitrogen allowances could potentially be traded on a commercial basis. That would allow all farmers to farm their land as they wish without it affecting the overall level of nitrogen in the environment.

## FARM ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS

### We oppose farm environmental plans.

27. We oppose this because it does not acknowledge any previous work done to reduce environmental impact.

28. It is a huge financial and work load burden on farmers to comply with this provision.

29. Smaller farms are unfairly heavily burdened as they do not have the capital funds for this.

30. **We propose this provision be amended.**

**As an alternative**, it would be a lot fairer to only require a full Farm Environmental Plan for larger farms, e.g. 100 hectares or bigger. Smaller units (ie. less than 100 hectares) could have a much simpler form, or even be exempt from this provision.

## STOCK EXCLUSION PROVISIONS

### We oppose Stock Exclusion Provisions.

31. This is a huge cost both financially and also in the manpower and work involved.

32. John has spent a large part of his life making this farm easy to work and he has everything in a good state of repair. He has worked out the way stock naturally flow, and has fenced the paddocks accordingly, without any dangerous corners etc.

33. Fencing the drains will disrupt all this. In some areas it will be difficult to shift stock from one paddock to another.

34. We have put in water troughs to discourage stock drinking from the water ways. We have noticed they prefer to drink from the trough, as it is easier for them to access.

35. Weed control of a fenced off area is difficult, requiring use of more chemicals right next to the waterway. This therefore negates some of the benefits of fencing the area off.

36. We have a very popular swimming hole in the Puniu River where people love jumping off high rocks into the water.

37. We also get a lot of fishermen. Neither the swimmers nor the fishermen would be able to easily access the river to enjoy their relaxation. Fishing has huge mental health benefits, which would be taken away.

**38. We suggest this provision be amended** by requiring only major waterways to be fenced off.

39. Also by requiring alternative water at a minimum distance away from minor waterways.

40. Fonterra's requirement that only waterways wider than a metre and deeper than your Red Bands, require fencing, is a lot more reasonable.

**41. We agree something needs to be done to clean up our waterways.**

42. Water pollution needs to be tackled by our whole population, even the folk in the cities. Humans are responsible for most of our pollution. It is not just farmers to blame for the state of our waterways. Most farmers are environmentally aware anyway.

43. As it takes a village to raise a child, so it takes a nation to clean up our waterways.

**44. The long term vision for our farm** will no longer be viable if Plan Change One comes about as it stands now. Our plan was to sell our property to a neighbouring dairy farm, whilst keeping a tiny piece for us to retire on.

45. We had planned to take life easier, as we enjoyed the benefits of our hard work over all these decades.

46. Now it appears we may no longer be able to stay on our farm due to all the extra work required.

47. Our life, our dream changed for ever.

**48. In conclusion**, we leave you with three thoughts:

If farmers are to blame for our waterways not being in pristine condition, why is Hamilton Lake not drinkable?

Farmers are expected to put in huge amounts of money to fix this problem. How many other people are prepared to donate similar amounts?

This plan will severely adversely affect younger people who have just bought their own farm and are struggling to pay off a big mortgage.

Just how many farmer suicides is considered acceptable?

Thank you.

John is happy to answer any questions.

## APPENDIX

### Summary of Plan Change 1 submission:

We oppose **Restricting Land Use Change.**

**Relief Sought:**

Provision deleted entirely.

**Alternative:**

Water pollution be addressed by all sectors of the community

We oppose **Nitrogen Reference Points.**

**Relief sought:**

Provision amended.

**Alternative:**

Allowances based on land size, not current land use.

Points potentially traded on commercial basis.

We oppose **Farm Environmental Plans.**

**Relief sought:**

Provision amended.

**Alternative:**

Implement much simpler Environmental Plan for farms less than 100 hectares or exempt them from any FEP at all.

We oppose **Stock Exclusion Provisions.**

**Relief sought:**

Provision amended:

**Alternative:**

Only major waterways be fenced off.

Alternative water provided a minimum distance from waterway.





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## Farm Map: WATERCOURSES 63 Ngaroma Road, Wharepuhanga.



Scale at A3  
 = 1:4,000

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 Date: 27/02/2019  
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 Ngaroma



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