

**BEFORE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED
BY THE WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of the First Schedule to the Act

AND

IN THE MATTER of Waikato Regional Plan Change 1- Waikato
and Waipā River Catchments and Variation 1
to Plan Change 1

AND

IN THE MATTER of submissions under clause 6 First Schedule

BY **FARMERS 4 POSITIVE CHANGE**
Submitter

HEARING STATEMENT OF ROBERT FRASER MACNAB
September 2019

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BACKGROUND

1. My name is Robert Fraser Macnab, and I am member of Farmers for Positive Change.
2. I own and operate a 147ha sheep and beef farm in the Te Akau District with 14 ha in the Waikato Catchment. I also lease in partnership 510ha dry stock in the North Waikato in the West Coast Zone and am the Chairman of Circle Hill LP, which is a 580 cow Dairy farm in Otago.
3. I was one of the inaugural group of farmers who recognised something terribly amiss with the proposed Plan Change 1 as notified, a situation that arose because of a dearth lack of sector leadership during the formative years leading up to the notification and how the consequences would have serious ramifications upon low N loss hill country farm systems.
4. I also refer you to the B+LNZ evidence presented by Richard Parkes and Merrin Whatley that agrees and concurs with the same insights I have presented here.
5. I own a majority share on Total Ag Ltd, a farm consultancy firm. I have been an Agribusiness Consultant since 2010, prior to that a Rural Banker for Rabobank for 5 years. From 1996 to 2005 I was a technical sales rep and Key Account manager for Ballance Agri Nutrients for the Western North Island.
6. Total Ag provides consultancy services to individual farm businesses throughout New Zealand across the wider agriculture sector sheep and beef, deer and dairy and specialize in farm systems and business structure
7. Total Ag also provides contracted advisory services to the principal sector organisations B+LNZ and DairyNZ facilitating workshops, seminars and other key topics of importance
8. In this capacity I have for Total Ag conducted numerous Farm Environment Plan workshops (note the interchange of Land and Environment Plans and Farm Environment Plans because the original

LEP template has been used to create a FEP template) to assist farmers develop and prepare the framework of their farm plans in readiness to have a plan that is fit-for-purpose for Plan Change 1

9. I have conducted in 65 Farm Environment Plan, Land Environment 1 & 2 Workshops with most of these occurring in the Waikato Waipa Catchment. The average attendance of farm businesses at the last 5 workshops has been 9.5 per workshop, which totals over 620 farmers that have started or completed their Farm Environment Plans.
10. I hold a Master's Degree in Professional Studies (Lincoln University), A Bachelor of Agriculture (Massey University) and Advanced Sustainable Nutrient Management Qualification for Massey University. I am a member of the NZ Institute of Primary Industry Management for over 20 years.

KEY POINTS

11. Farm Environment Planning workshops have been conducted in the Waikato Waipa region for several years and have successfully taken Farmers through a Farm Environment plan process. The environment of getting groups of farmers together to do collaborative learning has been successful, as this was identified by research as the best way to get practice change. Farmers respond to going through a process.
12. The template allows farmers to get additional benefits such as succession planning and farm operation clarified, which they value.
13. At its heart it is constructed by land users and they have the ability to make it specific to their farm. This empowers farmers to make the positive changes to water quality.
14. The process is evolving and gaining more success. It ties in very well with both Waikato regional Council initiatives and community initiatives such as sub catchment groups.

FARM ENVIRONMENT PLANS

15. Farmers and Land Users know and understand their physical resources better than anyone else.
16. Tailored farm Environment Plans constructed by Farmers/Users of the land will deliver the positive freshwater improvements sought by Plan Change 1.
17. At its heart is an acceptance that farmers know their land, its intrinsic strengths and weaknesses.
18. Farmers are the only ones that can alter their management to ensure that these strengths and weaknesses are governed by how they operate their farm systems.
19. Farmers experience of how the land, water and livestock interact will form a critical part and response of the Farm Environment Plan.

Critical components of Farm Environment Plans

20. Farmers identify the management units they have on farm, which is governed by the physical characteristics that are similar so therefore managed in a similar way (Land Management Units /Land Use capability).
21. Farmers then identify the strengths and weaknesses of those units with a focus on being specific to their farm and farm system.
22. Farmers then identify the actions they are presently doing/can do to meet prescribed environmental objectives such as:
 - a) Nutrient Management
 - b) Soil Management
 - c) Wetlands, Riparian management and stock exclusion
 - d) Land use and grazing management
 - e) Irrigation (If applicable)

- f) Biodiversity
 - g) Pest management
 - h) Critical Source Management
 - i) Hazardous substance areas (Offal pits, Rubbish dumps, airstrips etc.)
23. From these objectives a range of practical and effective responses can be created to ensure the farm is on a plane of continual improvement in regard to water quality.
24. They then have a 3rd party review their plan and suggest alternative actions or question responses detailed (Certified farm Environment Planner.)

Actions to create and effective Farm Environment Plan

25. In 2014 The Red Meat Profit Partnership commissioned Richard Fitzgerald to research on the best ways Farmers learnt new techniques and technologies. A key part of the research was that farmers are more likely to learn in group situations with other trusted farmers.
26. The farm Environment Plan journey for farmers must start with an environment that fosters that. B + LNZ recognize this with their workshops designed to initiate Farmers to new ways of looking at their farm systems with a view to improving water quality.
27. These workshops run for 5 hours and participants are given a template to work through. They are taken through the above process and have a highly interactive session. Facilitated discussion brings solutions from other farmers and identifies issues that commonly need to be solved.
28. It is this process that makes it less threatening for farmers and more applicable to their situations.
29. Common quotes are:
- a) *"I get this now, it makes sense"*

b) *"I already knew and do this, is it that simple"*

c) *"I can do that; it is not a big deal"*

30. The participants are provided maps from the Regional Council which include slope and potentially LUC. Farmers are asked to detail all the significant waterways, key infrastructures and any unique sites on farm (Historical, biodiversity etc). This allows them to have immediate ownership of their farm and its environment.
31. Farmers are then taken through the process of identifying Land management Units and the techniques to do so. They are then encouraged and provided the tools to complete their own on their maps. This is very interactive, and discussion is led by the facilitator.
32. In the workbook template they then identify the strengths and weaknesses of all their land management units. They make them specific to their farm, and relatable to what is currently happening on farm. They also identify what they currently use the unit for.
33. Farmers are then taken through the Environmental objectives in the workbook and are introduced to current best practices. They then detail their own aims based upon these, and then identify what current actions they are taking to meet these.
34. From this, farmers then create their own responses to ensure they move towards meeting their objectives and put a timeline to it.
35. At all times they have the forum to question and seek knowledge from other farmers in the room, with often specific responses suggested for issues that others have observed on farm over a period of time. This is especially helpful for recent land users (just purchased the farm, have succeeded it from family)

Evolution of Farm Environment Plans

36. Feedback from Farmer participant has been that the concepts introduced are often difficult to assimilate into a 5-hour workshop.

37. B+LNZ has successfully trialed workshop clinics 4 weeks post the workshop. This gives the farmer the ability to come and refine their plan with a certified farm environment planner one on one. 5 clinics have been run so far with participants going on to complete their farm environment plans at a 60% completion rate.
38. Waikato Regional Council have initiated “Risk and Mitigation” workshops that a precursor to Farm Environment Plan Workshops. This allows a much more detailed process time spent on the Farm Environment Plan that also leads to a higher completion rate.

FARM ENVIRONMENT PLANS & SUB CATCHMENT INITIATIVES

39. As stated earlier the most successful learnings and practice change comes from providing situations where farmers learn from other Farmers.
40. Having conducted several workshops in areas that have a sub catchment initiative are proving to be very successful. The Naike- Matira sub catchment of the Whangapae catchment provides the best proof of this.
41. There is 28 Farms in the Naike area and 15 in the Matira area. Driven by a sub catchment approach, 90% of these farms have been through a Farm Environment workshop, with at least 4 Farm Environment Plans completed.
42. By addressing the specific contaminants to the catchment, Farmer engagement has been high. This allows them, at a Farm Environment Plan workshop to discuss the issues and location on their own farms and get the group to provide ideas to mitigate them.
43. Thank you