

My name is Jeff Bryant. I am fifty four years old. I was born in Te Awamutu, New Zealand.

One of my concerns about Plan Change One is that a number of the people trying to call the shots do not have "skin in the game" so to speak. They are based "way over there" and have nothing to lose if the outcome of PC1 cripples farming. They will go back to their cozy lives and pay cheques and continue where they left off. Whereas this is our lives. We have to live the outcome of PC1.

If Plan Change One is passed in its present form it will seriously affect some people, both financially and mentally. Anecdotal evidence would indicate that some people will hang themselves over the outcome of this.

My wife and I own a dry stock farm at Arohena forty five kilometers south east of TeAwamutu, which my parents bought the year before I was born. We purchased it from them in 1993. It encompasses the sources of some of the tributaries which form the upper reaches of the Mangare Stream. The Mangare Stream flows into Lake Arapuni on the Waikato River.

Arohena is a small farming community, which has its own school, hall, play center and church. It was predominately a dry stock farming district until about the mid seventies. Then the dairy conversions started and it is now predominately dairying. Our property is bounded by dairying on the north side and dry stock to the south.

Over the past sixty plus years this property has run sheep, goats, deer, beef cattle and dairy cattle. Converting to dairying has always been an option but I have never considered it. But a future owner may. Being situated on the boundary of two dairy farms, a very likely option in the future would be for a neighbouring property to purchase it and add it to their milking platform.

Having the Nitrogen Reference Point set at a particular date, with no consideration given for past or future trends is unfair. It gives our business no provision to improve production. It also prevents any future owner from increasing production, and therefore income.

I would liken my situation to buying a truck off someone who only uses it to carry their own produce. And that produce just happened to be tomatoes. So that is all that truck is ever allowed to carry. And it can only carry the amount of tomatoes that the previous owner carried.

I know of no other industry which, if you invest in, you are not permitted to increase your production.

In our situation, our property was leased out over the period which the NRP is said to be set, so our production is governed by the results of an in efficient operator.

Here is an example of how unfair this system is, as I see it.

My property may have a NRP of 15 or 20, which if what I read in the media is correct, is the rate at which I was "polluting" at when the NRP was set. A nearby property may have a NRP of 50, because that is the rate at which they were previously "polluting" at. (I use the term pollute because that is the term the media continually use about us)

Apparently we are all having to reduce our NRP. It is highly likely that my NRP will be lower before we start reducing, than many properties after they have reduced their level. Should one property be allowed to pollute at a higher rate than another, just because they always have?

With regard to water quality, we are constantly being told that our water quality is declining rapidly.

In our region, I believe that is incorrect. Very little is publicized about water quality fifty plus years ago. Back then society used rivers as their waste disposal system.

We now have rules and regulations in place now to prevent this. There are frequent prosecutions of offenders, with reasonably substantial fines.

I found an interesting article recently. "New Zealand waterways not so clean and green" in the Waitomo News Feb 19 2019. See attached article

It warns the public that due to a heat wave nearly two hundred streams, rivers and lakes around the country are classified as unsafe for swimming. Waitomo and Otorohanga districts did not have any streams, rivers or lakes affected.

In my own situation, I believe water quality has improved considerably over the last fifty years. The property which I now own is the one which has been my home since I was born. As a kid I was always hunting eels in our streams. I could never find eels in our streams. I could find them in other catchments, so I doubt it was due to my fishing skills.

Now some fifty or so years later, eels are abundant. I see them in my day to day routines. Cleaning culverts etc. This would suggest to me that our water quality has improved.

This has most likely been influenced by the initiative of land owners of the Mangare Stream catchment, lead by Graeme Gleeson, who initiated a fencing and planting programme approximately twenty years ago. Although this was initiated on the Mangare catchment, landowners in some of the neighbouring catchments elected to take up the initiative also. There has been a lot of very good stream enhancement work done in our district. Land owners are being given no credit for this work that has already been done.

The statement Clean, Swimmable, Drinkable water 365 days of the year is dream in the minds of those who do not understand the environment and forces of nature.

Phosphate, Nitrogen, Sediment and E coli are the four factors being targeted under PC1.

Phosphate and Nitrogen are being hotly debated by supposed experts.

Sediment is a result of erosion. Erosion has happened since time began and will go on until time ends. It can be sped up or slowed down in some situations but in some situations the environment and nature dictate. The slip in the headwaters of the Waipa river in the Rangitoto Ranges is a prime example. Surrounded by native bush. Sometimes "stuff" just happens. The Waipa river continually runs brown, partly due to the slip and partly due to the environment it flows through. Where it meets the Waikato river there is a definite colour change. This is a famous spot for anyone wanting a picture to put with their story about water quality.

The Maungatautari Mountain Enclosure is another where nature and the environment dictate. That enclosure is as close to pre human New Zealand as anywhere is ever going to be. After a significant rain event, the streams flowing off Maungatautari flow brown with sediment, just like any other stream in the area.

It has also been reported that during times of normal flow, streams flowing from the Maungatautari Enclosure have levels of E coli higher than the New Zealand drinking water standards. Apparently this is due to the prolific native bird life on the mountain. Apparently the E coli levels decrease as the streams flow through farmland.

If the Maungatautari Mountain Enclosure fails on two of the criteria for Plan Change One, there is no chance of the rest of the region passing.

Drinkable water.

There is a list of all animals which must be kept out of waterways. We are led to believe this will ensure the water is safe to drink. Yet humans are allowed to swim in it. Humans are one of the dirtiest creatures that exist. Animals pollute water because they don't know any different. Humans will often defecate in waterways because they are too lazy to do the right thing. And in some cases because they are just plain evil. The health issues associated with human excrement are huge. Humans pose a far greater risk to drinking water standards than animals. So they should be kept out of waterways also. If I were to attempt to swim in a town water supply, I would most likely be arrested.

Trees

I have seen documentation, which I believe was produced by Waikato Regional council, that proposes land classes 6, 7, and 8 are to be planted in trees to offset nitrogen inputs into the waterways. This documentation included a map overlay, coloured to represent the various land classes. Photographs included outlined the various contours categorized in each class. Class 6 is very similar to the terrain which my property is. Rolling hills, much of it able to be driven on in a vehicle.

Another map overlay was presented which outlined the Nitrogen Reference Point allocations for the various areas. These were identified by various colours also. The high areas were identified with red.

When these two areas overlaid, they did not coincide. The area designated for trees is the outer areas, away from rivers and civilization and more densely populated areas. The areas with high nitrogen losses are flat contour, close to rivers etc.

To the best of my knowledge, no water quality testing has been done on my property. And I know for a fact that in some instances, some of the areas which are being designated for trees are having their water quality assessed by tests taken at a point forty five kilometers downstream. The river at this point incorporates tributaries from several catchments. Many with varying land uses. Water quality needs to be assessed on a catchment by catchment basis, not a region wide basis.

If trees need to be planted to offset nitrogen leaching, they need to be planted in the areas with the nitrogen leaching issues. When you look at the maps of where the high leaching areas are, they are areas which would be most suited to production forestry. Easy contour, easy access and close to amenities. There would be very few environmental issues when they are harvested. And they could be used to create buffer zones around fragile waterways.

Planting trees in areas where there isn't a nitrogen leaching issue, to offset nitrogen leaching makes no sense. I would liken it to a small village like Arapuni on the Waikato River, being forced to invest in a state of the art sewerage treatment plant, based solely on the fact that Hamilton's sewerage system was leaking into the same river 100 kilometers downstream.

Whereas planting trees where the nitrogen issues are has many advantages. Creates buffer zone to keep nitrogen away from waterways, contour is usually easier aiding in harvesting and reducing runoff and erosion at harvest, closer to amenities for easy of transport at harvest to name a few.

The correct class of livestock on marginal country is in my opinion a more suitable option than forestry. The correct class of livestock with a knowledgeable operator running them is a good option for minimizing effects on water quality. We sometimes see bad examples livestock in waterways, but usually it is due to an unscrupulous operator.

Some of the costs which have been predicted for some properties to comply with PC1 cannot be serviced by those properties over the time frame which is being suggested. Add to that our capital value has been slashed by the NRP cap and no land use change clauses. I would estimate close to a million dollars off my capital value and approximately two hundred thousand dollars for additional fencing, not counting what has already been done since purchasing the property. Another point to consider is that this work (fencing, water systems, plantings etc) is classed as capital expenditure. Therefore not tax deductible.

If someone would like to make an appointment to come out and test the water quality where it enters my property, and test it again where leaves my property I would have no problem with being held accountable for the pollution I'm causing. But as it is now, I'm expected to fix someone else's problems.

Time Frame

Ten year increments over an eighty year period are too short. We are constantly being told by experts that even if all nitrogen and phosphates were to cease entering the environment, there would still be a period of increasing levels due to past inputs. We are led to believe that Plan Change 2 will likely be influenced by results from PC1. Any infrastructure changes required under PC1 may be made redundant by PC2. Ten years is a short time frame to recover costs. Twenty years would be more realistic.

Summary

Happy to have water leave my property in same condition that it was when it entered, but don't want to be held accountable for someone else's mess.

Control measures should be assessed on a catchment by catchment basis to get control measures correct.

No one should be able to pollute at a higher level than the next person.

Apply offsetting measures in the actual areas where the issues are

Give credit to those who have been carrying out enhancement work on their properties.

And enforce regulations already in place for those who use our environment as a dumping ground.

New Zealand waterways not so clean and green

AS NEW Zealand looks to be heading for another heatwave, people are being warned to be careful where they cool off with nearly 200 rivers, lakes and streams classed as unsafe for swimming since November according to regional and district council information.

While Waikato and Otago districts are one of the few regions that do not have any streams, rivers or lakes on the list, others are not so lucky and if people are travelling outside the

area, unsafe waterways should be crossed off the places to visit list.

According to the local government Land and Water Aotearoa website "Is it safe to Swim Here?" section, warnings have already been issued for 175 waterways since the beginning of November, although some have since been lifted.

Unsafe levels of E. coli or toxic algae are to blame. In some cases, an official public health warning has been issued telling people not to

swim because of the risk of illness.

Fish and Game chief executive Martin Taylor says the disturbing figures show why Kiwis are so concerned about the poor state of our rivers, lakes and streams.

"The figures revealed by local government's own website shows how bad the situation has become," Mr Taylor says.

The regional council with the most warnings about off limit waterways is Horizons in

Manawatu-Whanganui, with 31 issued for its rivers, lakes and streams since November.

The actual figure of 175 unsafe waterway warnings over the three-month period may be even higher because Auckland Regional Council has no listings on the LAWA website.

Mr Taylor says "Kiwis want to be able to swim, fish and gather food from their rivers, lakes and streams but they are increasingly unable to do that because of pollution."