



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE
for the Waikato
REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

C/- Aimee Christensen
Waikato Regional Council
Private Bag 3038
Waikato Mail Centre
HAMILTON 3240

20 October 2015

Bill Wasley
Independent Chair
Collaborative Stakeholder Group
C/O Wasley Knell Consultants Ltd
100 Spring Street
Tauranga, 3110

Land use conversions: Upper Waikato

Dear Bill

Thank you for letter of 20 March, and for your request that ACRE provide current information gathered.

We felt it would be constructive to first visit Wairakei Holdings which is managed by Landcorp and is the single largest entity involved in dairy conversions. They are open to visits and discussions and in July, provided our group with a presentation, discussion time and tour of two of their farms. At the end of which they requested feedback from us. Please find enclosed a copy of our letter to them and maps attached which contain relevant information that you may find of interest.

In our view Landcorp's management of Wairakei Holdings is impressive, demonstrating best practice or close to it. We are concerned however, that many other conversions in the upper Waikato catchment may not subscribe to Wairakei Holding's level of investment and attention to environmental issues. However this is only conjecture on our part.

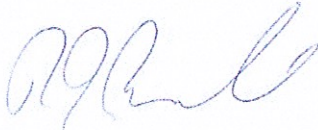
Dr Alison Dewes has modelled Wairakei Holdings using Overseer and concluded that once the whole area has been converted, they will be adding another 1200 tonnes of Nitrogen annually to the Waikato River. It needs to be stressed that the area of conversions that have already been completed and those that are still in the pipe-line well exceed Wairakei's land area. A conservative estimate would be by at least four times.

Extrapolating Dr Dewes's model over the predicted 100,000 hectares, results in a further 4,800 tonnes of Nitrogen. This example alone, shows an annual increase of 6,000 tonnes of Nitrogen entering the upper Waikato River catchment. We suspect that the actual figure will, in fact, be far greater. The Waikato River, with its present loading of Nitrogen cannot absorb the magnitude of this loading increase.

It is interesting to note that the ground water Nitrogen flowing into Taupo was decreased through WRC's Variation 5, which aimed to reduce Nitrogen level by lowering stocking levels. Yet just down the road in the Waikato catchment the stock increases are extraordinary.

This is why ACRE, and others, have asked for a moratorium on diary conversions until some rules have been developed that are sustainable for all sectors, i.e. economic, social and environmental.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rex Bushell', is positioned above the typed name.

Rex Bushell
Chairperson
Advisory Committee for the Waikato Regional Environment
rexbushell@gmail.com



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE
for the Waikato
REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

C/- Aimee Christensen
Waikato Regional Council
Private Bag 3038
Waikato Mail Centre
HAMILTON EAST 3240

26th August 2015

Chris Parkinson
Chief Executive Officer
Wairakei Holdings Ltd
1150 Broadlands Road
RD1 Reporoa 3081

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the time and hospitality offered to us on our recent group visit.

We said that we would follow up with some feedback:

Firstly we feel it would be productive to outline our concerns. We have a situation in the upper Waikato catchment of rapid and extensive dairy conversions, primarily from forestry, although some are from existing beef and sheep units, and these conversions are on very porous pumice soils. This will have future consequences of considerably increasing the nitrogen (N₂) loading of the Waikato River.

Nitrogen is not the only pollutant but N₂ from cow urine (as opposed to N₂ from fertiliser and effluent) is the only one that does not have a management control system other than stock reduction and, as you will be aware, stock numbers have greatly increased because of these conversions in the past ten years, completely wiping out any N₂ reduction achieved by existing dairy farms in the area.

Wairakei Pastoral Ltd tends to be pointed to by the media, probably because you are so open. However although your operation is large, the overall conversion picture in the upper Waikato catchment region is far bigger. We refer you to the Google earth views attached. The yellow stars are dairy conversion farms. This is not definitive. It is just an example to make the point that this problem is far bigger than the Wairakei Estate.

It is because of the above that ACRE wrote to the Healthy Rivers Consultative Group (CSG) on 16th December 2014 requesting a moratorium on dairy conversions so that time could be given to finding a solution to the N₂ management problem. We have a situation where on one hand government is encouraging dairy expansion, and on the other, giving Waikato Regional Council (WRC) environmental limits for the Waikato River. Science has no answer to this conflict in policy.

As to the Wairakei Estate's management policy; we were heartened to see recognition of the environmental challenges ahead and the effort being put into finding solutions. The employment of Rob Van Duivenboden as environmental

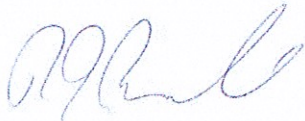
manager is a very positive move. As he settles into the job we would be very interested to be kept informed of his work and in particular the range of monitoring he undertakes.

We see Wairakei Estate as a leader in your field and would encourage you to keep an open door policy even though this may be challenging at times. Future environmental data collected from the Estate may well improve farm practices in the upper Waikato catchment region and we would encourage you to work closely with WRC when policy limits for the region are formulated. Further, we encourage your efforts to publicise and foster wider uptake of your management approach among other Waikato dairy farmers. Notwithstanding our concerns about conversions outlined above, it is conceivable that widespread uptake of the practices and model of farming that Landcorp and Wairakei Estate are developing could achieve an overall reduction nutrient output in the catchment. Some high-level modelling on this issue could be very worthwhile; it would consider the current area devoted to dairying in the Waikato catchment, its inferred nutrient output, and the changes in nutrient output that could be achieved by improved practice. This would help set the context within which future conversions take place as we see that the existing situation in the greater Waikato catchment is not sustainable.

While your efforts around retiring unsuitable land and planting natives are encouraging, members felt that in an operation of this size, there could be more attention to increasing native biodiversity, not just beautification, and this could be where positive news stories could be generated, with threatened species protection in some areas and undertaking conservation projects involving the local community.

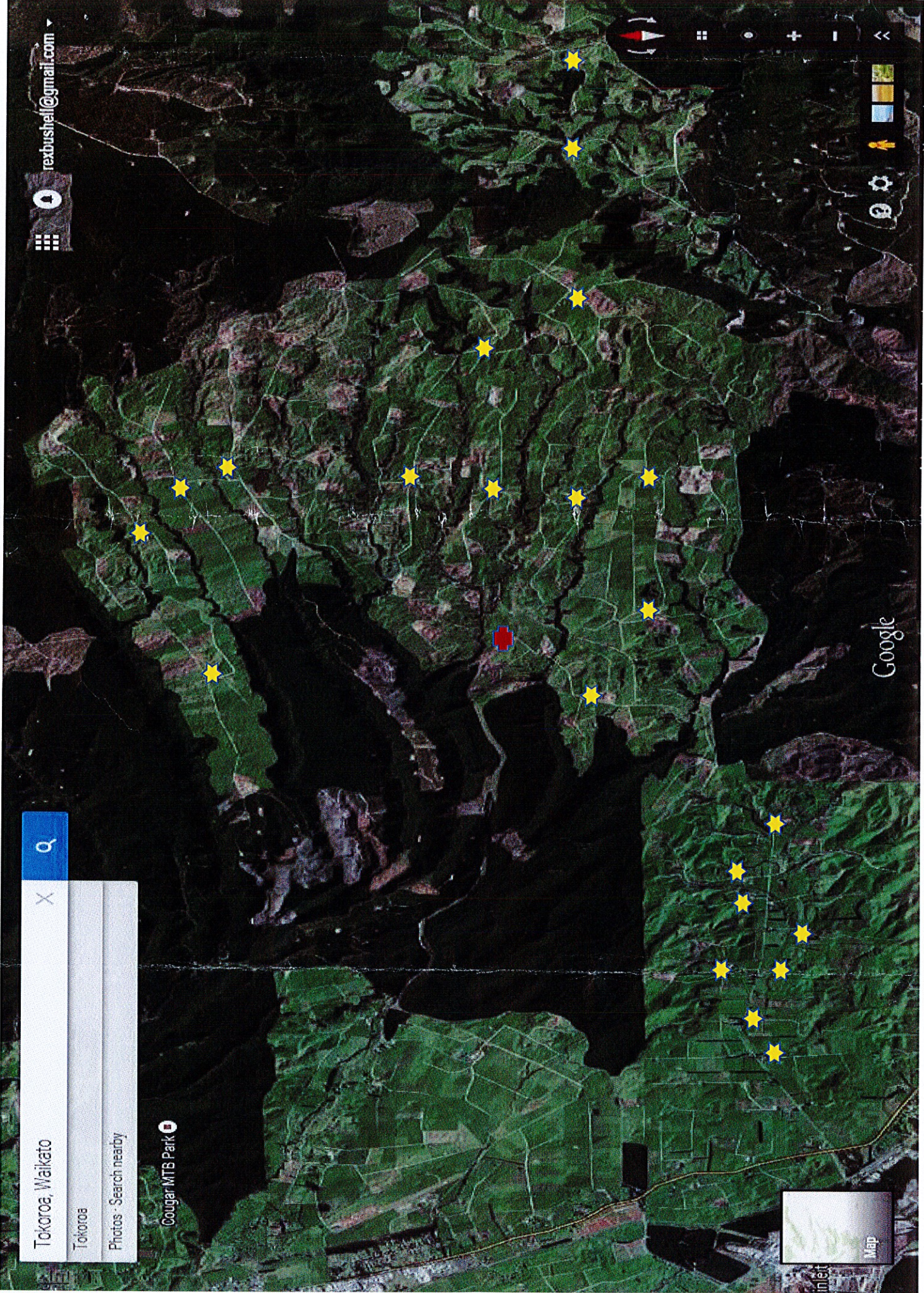
We enjoyed our visit and have come away with a high expectation of the Wairakei Estate, as you obviously have yourselves, and will follow your progress with interest.

Yours sincerely,



Rex Bushell
Chairperson
Advisory Committee for the Waikato Regional Environment
021-237-3857
07-854-0973

Tokoroa conversions East

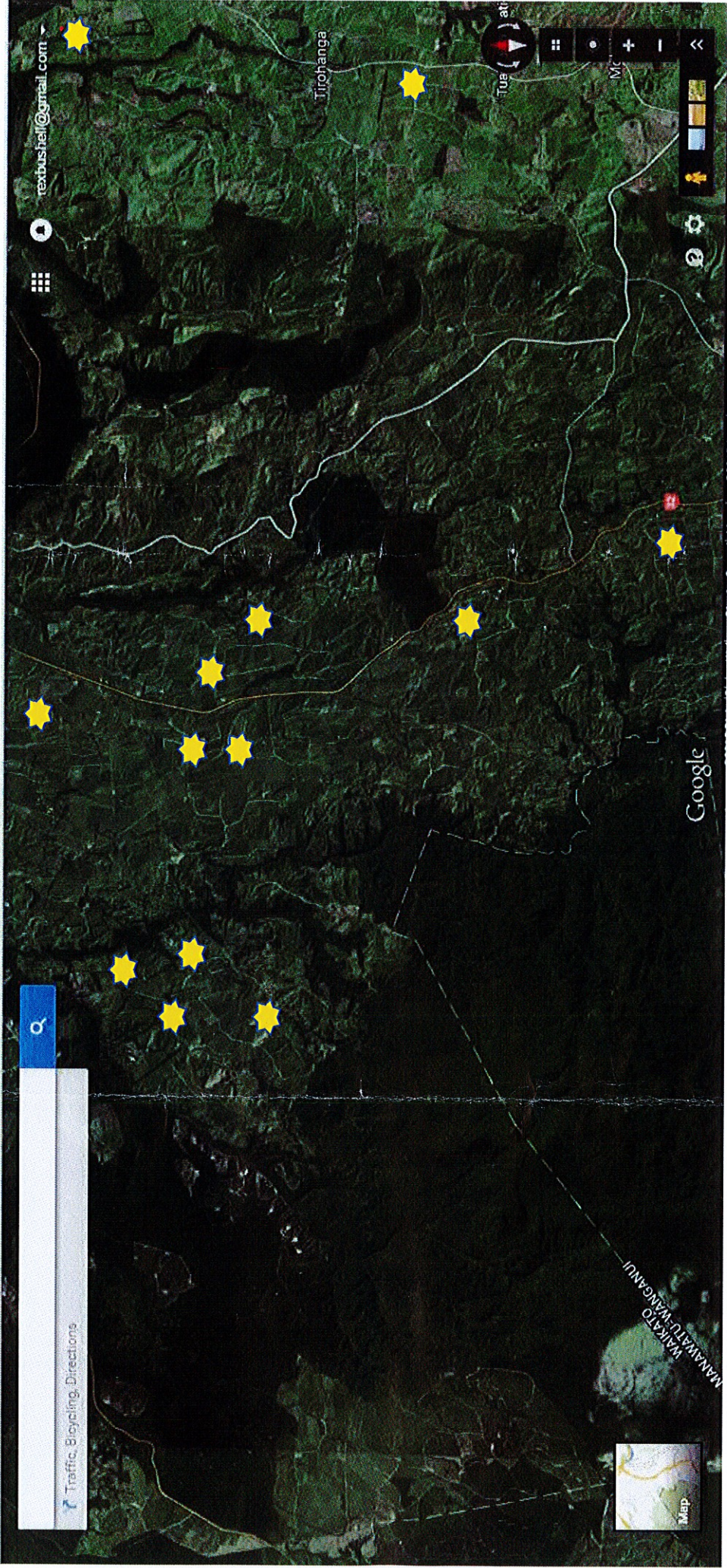


Tokoroa, Waikato
Tokoroa
Photos - Search nearby

rexbushe1@gmail.com

Map

Mangakino conversions



Tokaloa Conveisions west

