

**Before Hearing Commissioners at Waikato Regional Council in
Hamilton**

under: The Resource Management Act 1991

*in the matter
of:* Submissions on Proposed Plan Change 1 to
the Waikato Regional Plan

between: **Ballance Agri-Nutrients Limited**
Submitter

and: **Waikato Regional Council**
Respondent

**Statement of evidence of Jess Shailer for Ballance Agri-Nutrients
Limited**

Dated 3rd of May 2019

INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Jess Shailer. I am a Farm Sustainability Services Specialist for Ballance Agri-Nutrients Limited (**'Ballance'** or **'the Company'**) and I have been employed in this role for 2 years.
2. Ballance lodged submissions¹ and further submissions to Proposed Plan Change 1 to the Waikato Regional Plan (hereafter referred to as **'PC1'**).
3. For completeness, I confirm that I am authorised to present this evidence on behalf of Ballance. I am not presenting technical expert evidence, and as such, this brief should be read as "company evidence" expressing the position of Ballance.

SCOPE OF MY EVIDENCE

4. In my evidence, in order to provide context to the submission points and relief sought by Ballance with regard to the Block 2 Hearings, I set out the process of undertaking nutrient budget assessments and establishing Nitrogen Reference Points (**'NRP'**) in support of Policy 2, and the practical implications associated with the achievement of the timeframes for establishing NRP's as stipulated in Schedule B.
5. In addition to this, I have prepared a short presentation to provide an overview of the development of NRP calculations, the processes and timeframes involved and the development of subsequent Farm Environment Plans (FEP's).

BACKGROUND: MY ROLE AND EXPERIENCE

6. I have a Bachelor of Science from Massey University majoring in Agricultural Science and Biological Sciences (2012) and I joined the Ballance Farm Sustainability Team in July 2017. I am a Certified Nutrient Management Advisor (**'CNMA'**) and I have recently been registered with Waikato Regional Council as a Certified Farm Nutrient Advisor.
7. My main duties for Ballance revolve around conducting farm nutrient budget assessments and establishing NRP's. However, I also undertake a variety of other duties including assessing the Sustainable Dairying Water Accord (**'SDWA'**) annual nutrient budgets, and other nutrient budgets (including DairyBase, together with budgets for consents and contracts), attending field days on Ballance's behalf, meeting with customers, industry partners, real estate agents, and stakeholders (e.g. councils and dairy companies).
8. Since commencing my employment with Ballance I have conducted over 350 nutrient budget assessments and established over 40

¹ Original Submitter ID: 74036

NRP's. In the last six months I have started contributing to the development of Farm Environment Plans ('FEPs'). The majority of my work has been completed in Waikato Region with additional assessments conducted as necessary in the Northland, Bay of Plenty, Taupo, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu and Wellington regions.

POLICY 2

9. In its submission, the Company provided support for the development of FEPs as a means of achieving the desired water quality outcomes. In the Company's experience, a well designed FEP is an effective tool to implement 'on the ground' changes and, providing the framework for developing and certifying the FEPs is clear and practical, is a means of driving good environmental practices. The Company understands that this framework is provided via Schedule 1 of PC1 and that the consideration of Schedule 1 forms part of the Block 3 Hearing process.
10. The Section 42A officers have recommended a number of amendments to Policy 2 of the Plan Change, to specifically provide for FEPs as a tool to achieve the water quality outcomes. In particular, it is noted that the amendments provide policy support for the development of FEP's as a core methodology to deliver reductions across all of the four contaminants; provide for flexibility in their development and adaption to reflect the characteristics of different properties and farming activities; and providing for the auditing of FEPs as a means of ensuring quality and consistency across the region.
11. Ballance has actively supported such an approach in other regions throughout the country and, having reviewed the officer's recommendations to Policy 2, generally supports the way it is being advanced via the Plan Change 1 process. It is noted, however, that undertaking a FEP for each farming activity in the Region will require considerable resource and specific expertise to complete. As a result, the Company believes it important that particular consideration is given to the timeframes imposed to undertake the FEPs, so that compliance is actually able to be achieved.

SCHEDULE B

12. Schedule B of the Plan Change relates to the calculation of the NRP. The Company submitted on the Schedule, generally in support of the same, subject to a number of amendments designed to provide greater clarification in terms of its implementation. It is noted that clause e. of Schedule B requires the NRP analysis to be published to the Waikato Regional Council within the period 1 May 2020 to 30 November 2020, being a timeframe of six months.
13. In the Company's submission to PC1, it proposed that the timeframes for the registration of the NRP and the NRP data be amended, to a more achievable timeframe. At that time, it was submitted that a period of 12 months from the date that the Plan Change is made operative was more appropriate. It is noted that the s42A officers have not proposed a change to the timeframe.

14. In the Company's experience, the time and resources required to undertake such analysis is considerable and will require the engagement of a large number of suitably qualified persons to undertake the work.
15. As identified in paragraphs 7 and 8 of this brief, in my role with Ballance, I have undertaken approximately 40 NRP evaluations for customers throughout different parts of the country. In my experience, a typical NRP can take between 4 to 16 hours to complete, dependant on the nature and size of the farm being assessed. Information obtained from the Waikato Regional Council², identifies that there are in the vicinity of 5,000 farms in Waikato Region. In order to quantify the appropriateness of the time period for submitting the NRP evaluations, I have applied an average evaluation time of 10 hours for every NRP calculation. Multiplying this with the 5,000 farms in the region, equates to a total of 50,000 hours being necessary to ensure that each farm has provided the required evaluation and benchmark to the council. In order to achieve this within the six month timeframe proposed by the Plan Change, in excess of 62 full time qualified staff will be required. The Plan Change stipulates that specialised qualifications and experience are required to undertake the NRP evaluation, and as such there is a limited pool of people available to undertake this work. Such limitations are likely to place considerable pressure on farmers to achieve compliance.
16. In light of the above estimation and in accordance with its submission, the Company continues to promote an amendment to clause e. of Schedule B, to provide for an extended timeframe to submit the NRP evaluation.

CONCLUSION

17. Ballance is supportive of the general direction of the Plan Change and the use of FEP's and NRP's as a means of achieving the desired water quality improvements. In the Company's experience however, undertaking the evaluation and development required to produce accurate and effective FEP's and NRP's requires considerable skilled resource. As a result, the Company submits that the timeframes identified in the Plan Change need to be cognisant of the limited number of qualified people available to undertake this work, to ensure that compliance with the requirements is achievable.
18. I thank the Commissioners for their consideration of this statement of evidence and conclude with a short presentation on Ballance's approach to improving sustainability through the development of FEPs and NRP evaluations.

Jess Shailer

Farm Sustainability Services Specialist, Ballance Agri-Nutrients Limited
3rd of May 2019

² <https://waikatoregion.govt.nz/assets/PageFiles/22800/Implementation-Plan-working-draft-Proposed-Plan-Change-1.pdf> (section 8.2 page 11).