

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 **Mathew Sherriff, Kim Tatham, Max Sherriff and Zoe Sherriff**

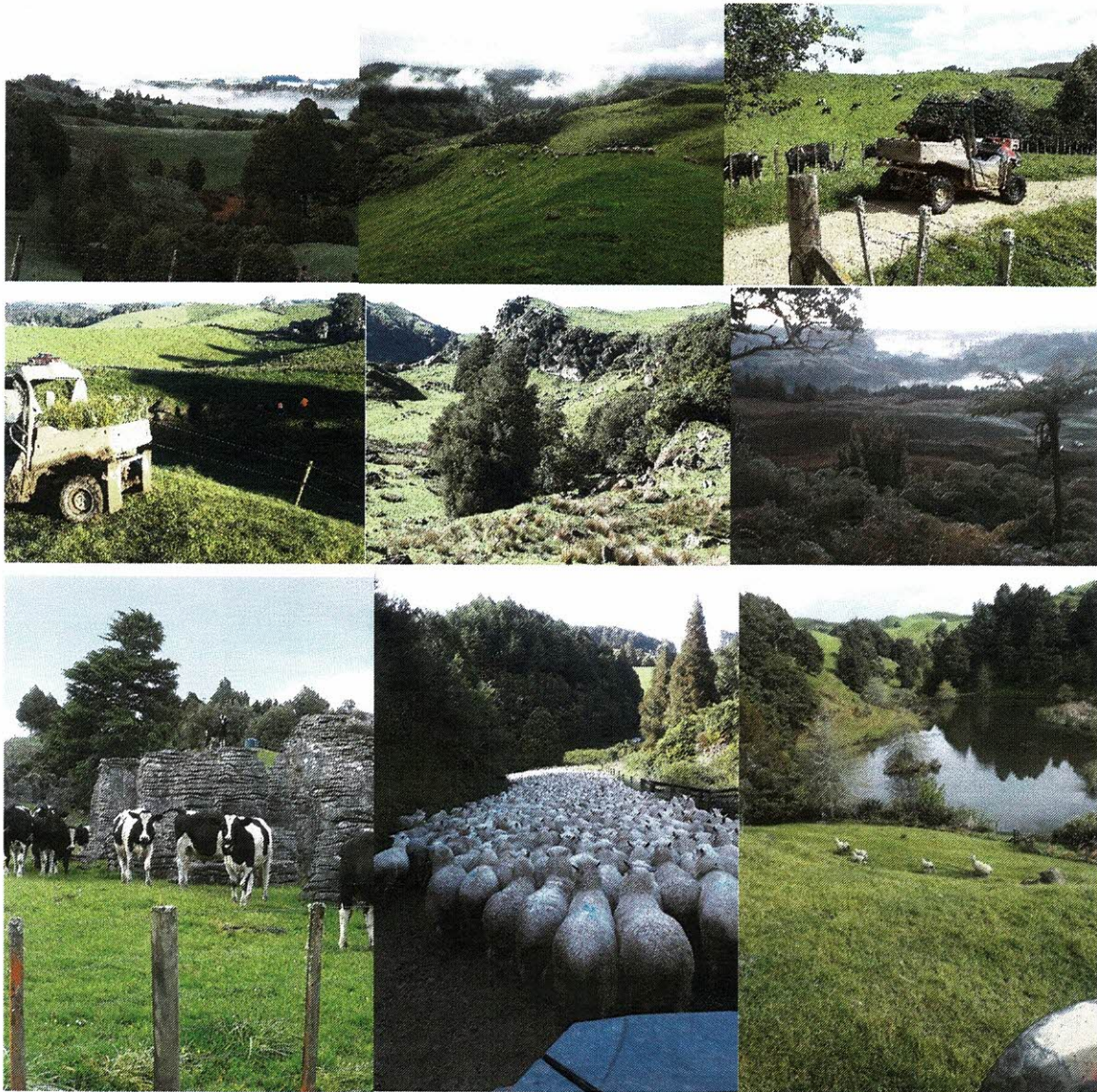
Submitter **Mathew Sherriff**

**HEARING STATEMENT OF Mathew Thomas
Sherriff
10 March 2019**

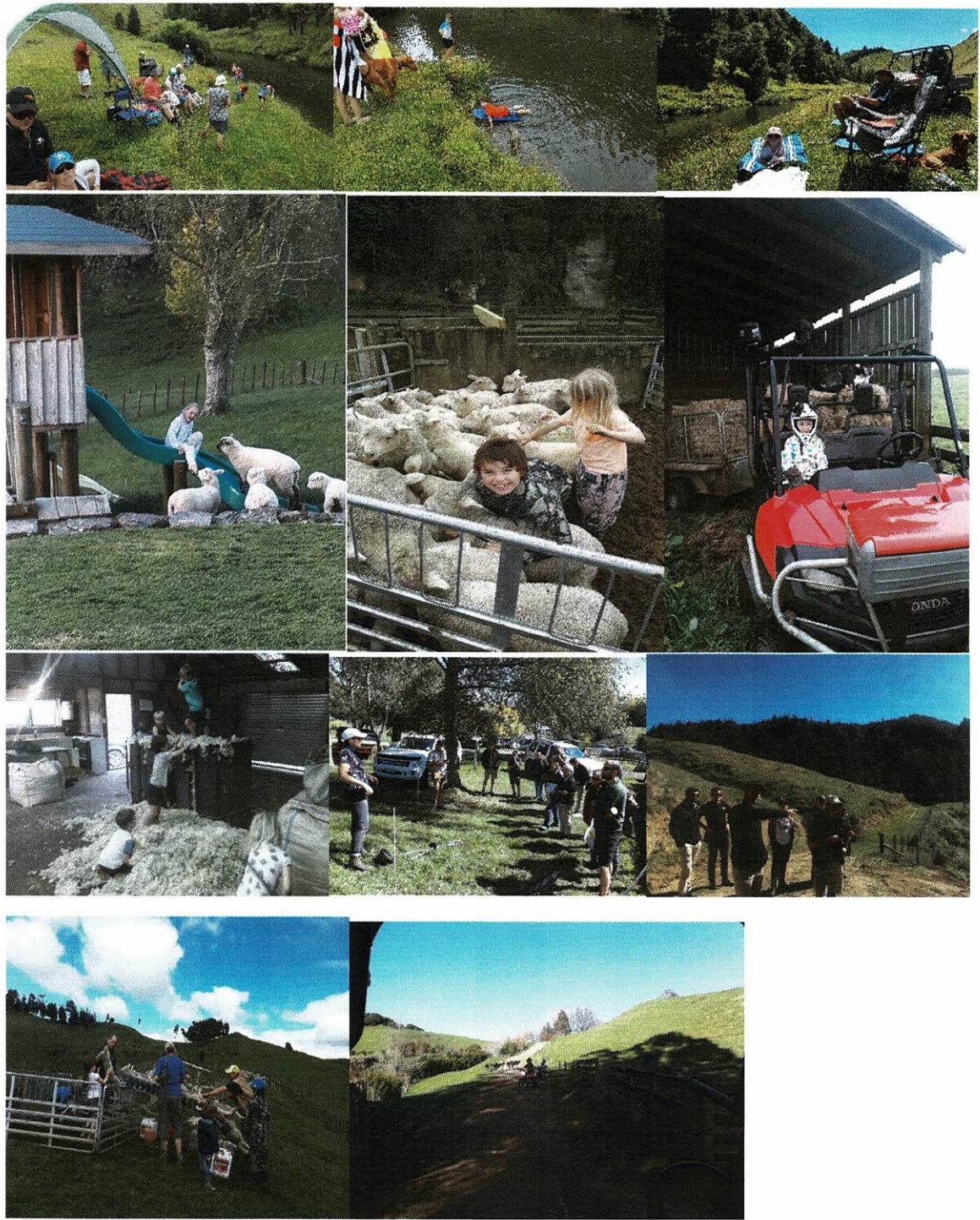
1. This Statement introduces who we are and what we do. We have included our one-page document which explains us as a farming business. I will attempt to point out some of the issues we have with the current plan; how they will affect our business and how there may be a different approach which has a better outcome for all. I will also highlight some of the effective on farm actions already undertaken.
2. I will specifically focus on:
 - Land Use Change
 - Farm Environment Plans (FEP)
 - Nitrogen Reference Point (NRP)
 - Stock Exclusion
3. Rotomate wants to take our love of the land and show case it to you. We are focused on producing sustainably farmed produce and are always looking to improve and grow our business. We have a very special place in the world. We want to show people all the good in the farming world and are continually striving to improve our systems and minimise our environmental footprint.
4. Rotomate gains its name from a dried-up lake on top of the farm. It was given to my father in-laws father by the local Kaumatua when he purchased the original farm in 1942. The farm has been in the family for 77 years and now my Kids Max and Zoe are the fourth generation to be on the land.
5. Kim and I are both very active in the local community. Kim is president of the Waitomo Ski Club, is a board member of the NZIMID (New Zealand Institute of Minimally Invasive Density) and runs a Charitable Dental Symposium once a year, with all proceeds going back to local groups and the school. I am one of the lead farmers in the Mangaotaki Sub Catchment Group, on the committee for King Country River Care, Deputy chair of the Piopio Primary School BOT, and Past President and Treasurer of the Waitanguru Hall Committee.
6. We are farming 1150ha of rolling to steep land. 500ha of family land we lease off my parent's in-law Barrie and Jude Tatham. 300ha Kim and I own and 350ha of Maori lease land. We farm in an area which has an average rainfall of 2000mm.
7. 260ha is in retired native bush, wetlands, and exotic plantations. 164ha of class 7 land, 227ha of class 6, 226ha of class 5, and 282ha of class 4. We farm a 50:50 split of cattle and sheep. With the cattle operation centred around bull beef finishing.
8. We try to match each class of land to the right class of stock. With the bull operation on the class 4 land and the sheep operation on the class 5, 6 and 7. The beef cows are used to groom pasture for the bulls and the lambs. They do one round of the steep class 7 land during the dry summer months to minimise their environmental impact.
9. We use winter crops to winter the cows on. This is to try and minimise the impact they have on the hills during the winter months. We follow the winter crop with a summer crop for

lambs and then the area goes back into new pasture in the autumn. This reduces the weed pressure on the new pasture.

10. 98% of all our bull beef operation has cattle excluded from waterways. This should be 100% by the end of next summer. The last remaining areas are on the Maori lease land. 80% of all running waterways are fenced for cattle exclusion in our sheep country with more planned to be done this coming summer. This will take it to around 85% and all the rest are in areas that are unrealistic to be fenced due to contour and location.
11. We have reticulated water to 95% of all our paddocks. With the only ones without trough water in the steep country. There is well over 300 water troughs on the farm.
12. We have 260ha of retired wetlands bush and rocky outcrops. The bush is in a mixture of native and exotic plantations. There is approximately 40km of fences surrounding these protected areas with around 5km to go.
13. Over the past 77 years the farming practices have changed dramatically. Lambing percentage has lifted from 100% to 150% with a reduction of the number of ewes farmed per ha to cope with this increase in lamb numbers. Heavy breeding cows have been replaced with lighter faster growing Bulls. Leaving the bare minimum to help control summer grass. There are also ever-changing market forces, which may push the cattle to sheep ratio one way or another. Let's not also forget the seasonal weather patterns which can force a destock one year, followed by a major restock the next. In order to do all this, we have needed to be flexible. It is vital that we can continue to be flexible in the coming years in order to mitigate the major changes we are facing at the present.
14. We are not farming within the Waikato Waipa catchment so will not directly be affected by the PC1 rule. But we do have some grave reservations around what this plan will do to our farming neighbours and our local communities who are affected. Also, the precedent that it will set for all future plans. We all need vibrant, thriving, confident, collaborative rural communities and the proposed plan as it stands will destroy this.



Our farm and Livestock



Us on the Farm

Specific parts of the Plan I am Commenting On:

i. Land Use Change Policy 6 and 16

15. We are in an era of massive change, and that rate of change is huge. If policy makers want us as farmers to adapt and grow as an industry, we need the ability to change the way we go about our business. While I understand the logic around the need to stop unrestricted large-scale conversion of land from low emitting to high emitting enterprises. The policy and rules are very blunt.
16. All farms are not the same and there are hundreds of different ways to farm the same land, with hundreds of different outcomes. I see a future where farming business have several different enterprises on their land. From horticulture on the best class of land, dairy from sheep and goats as well as cows on some of the rolling land, sheep on the hill country and plantation forestry of both exotic and native trees on the steep highly erodible land. There are also opportunities for tourism and on farm accommodation. What is the best use of each class of land?
17. Policy framework should recognise the sectors diversity and work to enable this into the future. In order to ensure the sector and our landscapes maintain and build resilience, in the face of changing markets, public expectations and environmental challenges. It is no point in getting 20 years down the track and finding ourselves a net importer of food from countries with a lower environmental footprint than ourselves. We will have fewer communities less money and there is still no guarantee that the water will be any better.
18. Let's start with empowering farmers and allowing them to be flexible, innovative and adaptive. Let's look at the land use capabilities (LUC's) of the land and work to them, allowing farmers to invest in their future.
19. It is also ridiculous to have one rule for one type of land compared to another as policy 16 says. If the true outcome is for healthy rivers, we need to all be singing from the same song sheet, irrespective of the colour of our skin or where our parents came from.

ii. Farm Environment Plans (FEP)

20. We support the use of FEP's and feel that these have been a good outcome of the process and could become the cornerstone of any farming enterprise. The FEP's as described in the PC1 document however are too prescriptive and inflexible. The time frames set out to have these done by is unworkable, and there will be no buy in from farmers if they are just a regulatory tool.
21. The FEP needs to be adaptive, flexible and above all owned by the farmer with an understanding of the specific local conditions tying into the catchment scale planning approach. They need to have a tailored approach, focusing on the farm's natural capital stocks and emission pathways. They should include LUC's mapping at farm scale (1:5000 to 1:10000), as this currently provides the most robust system for identifying the farms

vulnerable areas and unlocking its opportunities. Most importantly they need to align with the farms business, family, social and cultural goals.

22. They should include:

- Identifying of land management units and their strengths and weaknesses
- Identify the critical source areas and ways to mitigate these
- Identify areas where on farm practices can be improved both environmentally and financially.
- Provide evidence of on farm sustainability practices for our customers
- Action and timeframes that are written down and achievable
- Be integrated with business and personal goals
- Be part of the yearly stocktake and budgeting exercises.

23. Beef and lamb New Zealand have some good LEP's developed already with level 1 and 2 being able to be carried out by the farmer already. Professional one on one help from a consultant required needed to complete level 3.

24. We have a mixture of FEP's for our farm. From an FEP 2 for the home and lease block and a comprehensive farm plan completed by Groundstock with WRC and MPI support, for our own block. We are in the process of combining these all into one document and moving towards the goal of being carbon neutral. Which is near impossible at present with the goal posts continually changing.

25. I have included some photos of on farm mitigation works that have been carried out





iii. Nitrogen Reference Point (NRP)

26. We oppose the nitrogen reference point and the PC1 approach towards grandparenting. It rewards the high emitters and penalises the low. It is open to gaming and some perverse outcomes. It acts as an incentive to land users outside the current catchment area to intensify their land in order to grab as much of the resource as possible.
27. Emission targets should be set at the farm level according to each farms LUC. These need to be science based and tie into existing land use and each sub catchments environmental targets.

iv. Stock Exclusion

28. We do not support the blanket mandatory fencing of all waterbodies in hill country. This approach does not consider the extensive farming systems, natural landscapes and is not effects based. We have a comprehensive water reticulation system on the farm and where practical have fenced off cattle from water ways. Where it is not practical, we manage the paddocks accordingly. With only stocking cattle in those paddocks for a short time and only when the weather is dry. We also use settlement ponds and wetlands in areas that are of high risk.
29. Again, these stock exclusion practices should be tailored to each individual farm and included in the FEP. There are plenty of ways to skin a cat. In most hill country it's the overland flow pathways which pose the most risk for sediment, phosphorous and pathogens entering waterbodies and not the direct deposition.
30. The inclusion of intermittently flowing waterbodies in section 42A is of significant concern on hill country properties. This is especially true for us in the Waitomo as we have plenty of waterways which are underground for most of the year but when the water table is high, they just bubble up out of the ground.

31. Blanket rules around riparian setbacks are also a nonsense in hill country. These need to be tailored to each individual property and covered within the FEP. Fencing some of these areas is going to involve lots of tracking and earthmoving along with health and safety risks. There will also need to be a large amount of weed control required.
32. Farmers are very good at solving a problem when we are presented with one. This is why we have been so successful over the generations as a country. Give us some time and some flexible frameworks to work towards and you will be amazed at the outcomes that can be achieved. We all want a healthy sustainable environment to live and work in. We are only caretakers of the land and want to leave it in a better state for our children and our children's, children.