

PROPOSED WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL PLAN CHANGE 1
WAIKATO AND WAIPA CATCHMENTS
Submissions To The Waikato Regional Council

This scheme as proposed is neither practical nor achievable .To have a vision to return the rivers to the state they were in 150 years ago is a great idea until the practicalities are taken into account.

Nitrogen

Firstly nitrogen as you are aware comes from many sources and the least source is from native bush so plainly the region is not going to regenerate into forest .The region has been farmed for well over 100 years and nitrogen leaching from livestock and crop farming is are part of this Low levels of nitrogen does not make water undrinkable or un-swim-able ,the problem with nitrogen is that it induces water weed and algae to grow in slow moving or stagnant water. There has to be a balance between the amount of nitrogen leached and weed growth in the lower Waikato river .I maintain that it would be of immense benefit to the whole region economically to encourage agricultural production rather than restrict it and harvest the weed growth in the lower Waikato river for compost making or ensiled for stock-feed .The technology is available and makes perfect sense to extract the nutrient in the water by harvesting the water plants. Businesses could be set up to harvest this vegetation and turn it into useful products .

Phosphorus

Phosphorus is not mobile through the soil and generally gets into streams with the erosion of topsoil during heavy rain events. All the soils in this region are phosphate deficient and need annual dressings of phosphate to enable farms to operate profitably Phosphorus will only be a problem with extensive soil erosion which which is not happening to any extent but can with extreme weather bombs and I can recall that Kakapuka mountain was scarred from top to bottom with slips in the 1958 flood , even although the top half was well covered with native bush.

Sediment ,Clarity

We have some very muddy rivers and some very clear rivers .The Waipa is labeled as a dirty river but above Otorohanga it is generally clear .The problem comes from the tributaries from the south and west .The Mangapu the Waitomo and the Moarakura which always carry heavy silt burdens after heavy rain and they do not seem to have improved since the extensive river bank fencing has taken place . I maintain that the muddy tributaries are muddy because they run through clay country and heavy rain will always flush out the fine clay and the same is seen of the Mangawara at Taupiri which is always brown with clay running into the Waikato river..

Ecol I

If ecoli from livestock discharges are such a problem all our farmers would be sick or worse ,During milking and handling sheep and cattle farmers, their staff and children all seem to survive quite well . This and other pathogens are a barrier to swimming and this is where the council should be focusing their attention Where are these pathogens coming from and how are they getting into the rivers . With dairy farm effluent rules and containment I doubt that any quantity of dairy farm effluent reaches streams .I maintain that the majority of pathogens entering the river are urban based from sewage and storm water discharges .Some of the highest readings in the Waikato are below sewage treatment outflows and other point source discharges in urban areas. Water sampling is and should be undertaken to identify point source discharges and steps should be taken now to curtail them and not wait for resource consents to expire. .

Sound Science,

The river plan has to be underpinned with robust science not lofty unattainable goals .The council has stated the readings that they are aiming for in 80 years time but are they achievable without shutting down farming in the catchment.? The levels of Nitrogen , Phosphorus Clarity and Ecoli. as set out could well be impossible to achieve and scientists and economists should have a vigorous debate on

whether they are attainable without destroying the regions economy .The first part of the plan is for 10 years ,What happens after that .If the rivers are still muddy during heavy rain and the nitrogen levels are climbing in 10 years time what is the next stage. The council have to have a road map of how they are going to achieve their goals The whole 80 year plan has to be presented to the ratepayers before it is implemented . You cannot start something without a clear plan of how you are going to achieve an outcome .None of us will be here in 80 years time .If your response is "we can't see into the future" then you should not be attempting an 80 year project..

.More forestry will be a good solution on steep marginal land but the council has to give a guarantee that all steep blocks will be able to be harvested in the future No one wants to retire land from farming and spend money and time planting and pruning trees to be told 25 years later that the land cannot be harvested because of fear of erosion and debris .

Stream Fencing

The plan will restrict agricultural production and be extremely costly for a lot of farmers on hill country to fence off streams for very little gain when measured in the lower Waikato river .Farmers need guarantees that once they have fenced drains or streams that the council will not alter the regulations and demand wider margins ie 1 meter to 3 meters and then sometime in the future demand 5 meter margins

Bureaucracy.

There is far to much Bureaucracy with this plan 'Every farm has to have a plan and submit facts and figures to the council .A whole new department will be set up at a great cost and what will be the gain ? All facts will have to be checked by an army of managers when that expense could be far better spent out on the land fencing and stream margin planting .We do not want any more personnel employed at the Waikato Regional Council as it becomes a self serving organization and has grown rapidly over the last 30 years and this plan will increase costs for little gain .We are heading into a bureaucratic nightmare were farmers will be controlled by bureaucrats who will be telling farmers what they can and cannot do on their own land .We are rapidly approaching the European model where there is one bureaucrat overseeing agriculture to every farmer ,We don't want this and we don't need this and the council has to look very carefully at this plan and how they intend to implement it .Farmers in Britain and Europe get subsidies for all manner of environmental projects and if a scheme like this was thought up it would cost millions from central government to go towards implementing it but with this scheme you are expecting farmers to not only pay to comply but you are going to restrict what farmers may do with their own land and how they farm .

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Additional information Waikato , Waipa River Plan change 1

Good afternoon .

I want to emphasize that low levels of nitrogen in the Waipa and lower Waikato river are not a problem as the levels are well below drinking water requirements .

The problem with low levels of nitrogen is that it can encourage weed growth but does not make rivers un-swimmable or undrinkable . Weed harvesting in rivers and lakes is being carried out in many countries including in Lake Rotorua and would be worth looking at in the lower reaches of the river if weeds become a problem.

Both sediment and phosphorus will be deferred with pine planting on steep country but at and after harvest both will become a major problem with bare land exposed to heavy rainfall after harvest.. Phosphorus generally only gets into water in soil that is washed in during heavy rain .

Sediment .Early explorers in the Waikato observed that some of the rivers ran very brown after rain

This still happens and is not caused through farming activities .The worst streams run through heavy clay beds and no amount of regulations will stop this from happening .

E. coli has to be the focus of council and I believe that with regular sampling point source discharges will be identified , mainly of urban origin .Farmers and their families and staff handle animals every day and the illnesses caused by E. coli is not an issue in farming families.

Sound science.

I am aware that the Waipa river has improved from when towns and dairy factories used the rivers to dispose of waste water .

Farm Effluent

Fonterra started with winter milk suppliers to upgrade their facilities and in 2013 we completed a concrete pond with a capacity of 2,6 million litres with channels and weeping wall separation holding another 400000liters totaling 3 thousand cubic meters of storage.

The replacement cost of this facility is over \$250'000.

The last of the dairy farms are now completing upgrades and installing more storage and extending effluent irrigation coverage .

99% of farmers are trying to do their best but smaller marginal farms are being squeezed with the costs of upgrading their facilities .

Implementation

The first ten years of the implementation of this plan will be crucial and I cannot see the sediment factor decreasing .Heavy rain only has to raise river level slightly and if they run between clay banks the water runs brown . Just last Friday I was in the Waerenga area after 30 mm of rain over night. The farm drains were all clear but every creek was brown and in flood .

Already I see people stating that we need 5 meter margins alongside streams This will not help at all with the sediment problem as the sediment is not coming off easy farming country .

Bureaucracy.

Farmers do not want or require extra paperwork and expense every year.

.The implementation of this plan in this form will not work .

Farmers know that gradual improvements can be made and often peer pressure from other farmers to lift their game works much better than rules and regulations dictated from Council.

Farmers are gradually coming around to do what they can to protect the rivers and the environment and a small carrot works better than a big stick.

I will repeat what I stated in my original submissions .

There is far to much bureaucracy in this plan .

We are rapidly approaching the European model where there is one bureaucrat overseeing agriculture to each farm .

I also think that each major stream should have its own catchment profile and the higher level catchments should be targeted first .

Graham Anderson