

Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1 – Waikato and Waipa River Catchments Hearing.

Statement of Judith McGrath

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Introduction:

Judith McGrath

I am a member of Taupo Lakes and Waterways Group and Taupo Lake Care and a retired Home Economics teacher.

My late husband, Joseph James McGrath, and I obtained our 186.7 ha farm at 1281 Mapara Road Taupo, from the Lands and Survey ballot of December 1965. We moved onto it on 03/03/1966 with a leasehold title until we bought the freehold about three years later. It is two thirds in the Ohaaki sub catchment and one third in the Taupo Lake Catchment. We farmed it as a sheep and cattle breeding and fattening farm until after the 1970 drought, when we started to phase out the breeding cattle and replaced them with trading cattle, and later dairy grazers. In 1996 we began converting some of the farm for deer. In December 1988 our eldest son, Colin James McGrath and daughter, Jenene Karen McGrath, bought 27.5 ha in Tuhingamata Road for farming deer. In January 2008, this partnership was dissolved when Jenene and her late husband bought 23.5 ha in Oruanui Road, again for farming deer and Colin and his wife took over the property in Tuhingamata Road. Since 1996 the deer have been farmed in a three way partnership. On my farm, we continued to phase out the cattle and continued to increase the deer. With my husband's death 19/09/2010, 'Whitiora Farm Partnership' was formed, 50% owned by me, the rest equally by my four children: Colin James McGrath, a Civil Engineering consultant, Jenene Karen McGrath an accountant, running her own business from her home. Gavin Basil McGrath, a mechanical engineer and partner in a large Taupo firm specializing in geothermal energy. They all live nearby. My other son Bryce David McGrath, is based in Perth, Australia. Jenene is the overall manager, but my two Taupo based sons are actively involved. The farm has always been farmed sustainably. There are no waterways, springs or swamps. Although we have a farm bore and water reticulated into all paddocks, we are still receiving a limited amount of water from the Whakarua water supply to the two houses on the property and a couple of paddocks at the wool shed. Outside labour/contractors are employed as needed. In February, 1975, due to the recent farming down turn I returned to teaching in order to supplement our income, and stayed teaching until 1998.

The points I wish to empathise in my oral submission are:

1. Restrictions on land use: I have seen, over the last 53 years many sudden changes in economic conditions, some political, but many due to weather problems, which have needed quick changes in farm policy. Freedom is often needed for some changes. Farming in Taupo has been very challenging, with frequent droughts/long dry periods. Will my family be able to continue farming deer as they grow older? Sheep are very labour intensive. An NDA of 14 is very limiting and unfair.
2. Grand parenting is not fair: not only is it unfair, it is unreasonable, as is using Overseer for this purpose, which is known to be unreliable. Nitrogen reference points, the same for all dry stock farmers would not penalize farmers who have already made changes and be much fairer. Flexibility is needed. We are already farming sustainably, and have been for many years. We only use nitrogen to establish farm crops, never on pasture. Sheep and deer are low nitrogen polluters. We may need to introduce some cattle in the future in order to keep farming sustainably and prevent worm problems, and as my family get older. Farmers who are already farming sustainably should not be further penalized. Recently we have had a series of droughts: from the 2009/2010 year through to the 2015/16 year, we had 4 years out of 6 years with droughts. The 2011/2012 year and the 2015/2016 year we did not have droughts. Recovering from these years has taken time. This farming year, October was the 2nd driest since recording began, and then during very hot weather from 26/12/18 to 14/01/19

only 6 mm or rain was recorded at my home. Then this calendar year, until the 30th June like other northern north island places, the weather has been drier than average with, in Taupo, according to the 'N.Z.Herald' newspaper, 302.6mm of rain fell. The average for this period is 499 mm

3. Farm consultants: are expensive and an unnecessary expense. Farmers these days are well educated and many have tertiary degrees and or certificates. All of my three children involved have post secondary qualifications in their business fields, and are successful business people.
4. Grazing on hills of 15 degrees: these restrictions are unreasonable as this is a management problem easily dealt with. Planting small blocks of trees on these slopes is not economic, and harvesting is very expensive.
5. Farm Environment Plans: are costly and unnecessary for farms with no waterways, swamps or springs.
6. Prevention of cultivation of slopes: slopes of 15 degrees are not too steep for cultivation. Prevention of cultivation of these slopes is unreasonable and unnecessary, and doesn't solve our problems with brown top eradication.

Thank you,