

BEFORE THE Commissioners Appointed

IN THE MATTER OF Healthy Rivers Wai Ora Plan Change 1

STATEMENT OF Timothy John Hale
(Submitter ID: 72688)

Date: 1st April 2019

Contact for service:

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My name is Timothy John Hale (known as Tim)

This is a personal hearing statement.

My wife and I own a 2.96 hectare property at Matangi, which is located in the Mangaonua sub-catchment and within the Middle Waikato Freshwater Management Unit.

I am employed by AgResearch Ltd as Farm Operations Manager at Ruakura.

I have been employed in a range of farming roles over the last 37 years, with the majority of these being in sheep and beef or drystock operations.

My early career was largely spent working on properties with most of the farmed areas being moderate to steep hill country and these properties also had river flat areas prone to flooding in larger rainfall events.

I am a member of NZIPIM (Fellow) and active on the Waikato branch committee and until 2017 was a member of Beef + Lamb Mid Northern Farmer Council or its predecessors for over 20yrs.

Our property falls under proposed rule 3.11.5.1 being less than 4.1ha and all permanent waterways are fenced – we have the Matangi drainage scheme passing through the back of our property and another section of this along our northern boundary, both dry currently.

Our property seems to be in the path of overland water flow from neighbouring properties or the road in higher rainfall events or when ground water levels are high.

We transplanted some natives, including Kauri to a back corner of the property and have been working to establish a small pond and wetland area, but nature and well-draining soils are making this challenging without some form of liner.

We initially had a mainly horses on the property as one of our daughters is a keen equestrian, but now have 1 old horse and 3 beef cattle and have had minimal external inputs over the 10 years we have owned the property.

We are lucky in that our outside employment or other business activities have meant this property has not had to pay it's way and from the proposed rule on 'land use change' this will have to remain the case as we contemplate our later years!

Within our close vicinity we have properties with kiwifruit, grapes, blueberries, strawberries, nashi pears and lavender as some alternatives we previously had been considering.

As you will have identified from my written submission, I am concerned about the Economic and Social cost to rural areas. The economic modelling of the proposed plan that I have seen, even at the lowest level is a huge impact on the regional economy. At an individual farm business level while variable, these costs will come out of the business potential surplus and as our current Government is signalling it isn't going to end here.

I have personal experience of the impact of the forestry industry buying hill country farms on the East Coast taking viable, relatively stable farms to plant. The district school was soon impacted, became unviable with the loss of employment opportunities for younger families and closed. The community hub was removed and the challenges of attracting farm employees increased.

This proposal is clearly intergenerational with the 80 year timeframe. It is also challenging for many in that currently there is no certainty on requirements beyond 2026, making mitigation investments challenging in marginal farming situations. Current land use is locked in with intensification or farm system changes unlikely to be

approved. This has been identified to have potential impacts on land values.

This will likely make it even more challenging for farm succession planning or for younger farming families to meet the financial requirements of lending institutions.

Opposed to the use of a blanket Nitrogen Reference approach as it is a blunt and unfair approach, especially for those with low emitting systems. Sheep and Beef farmers are usually lower users of either direct Nitrogen applications or bringing in feed from off farm as their farm systems are based on the normal pasture growth curve within their locality. Making animal sales or purchasing decisions based on projected natural feed availability.

Also opposed to the blanket fencing and stock exclusion requirements for hill country as currently proposed. Knowing many hill country situations, the practicality and cost of achieving these requirements will very exorbitant for what is likely to be minimal improvement in environmental outcomes if the overall farming system is managed to achieve Farm Environment Plan goals.

Support the use of Farm Environment Plans and a sub catchment approach to best deal with the identified required environmental mitigations in the most practical manner within individual farm systems or at the most appropriate point within a sub catchment. My experience is that farming neighbours generally work well together for common goals and collectively learn from their peers well in small group environments.

In summary I realise the river treaty has set some requirement's on the Regional Council which given the obvious changed state of the river systems from the natural state are challenging to achieve.

The majority of farmers I know are concerned for the health of their natural resources and the welfare of their animals. They are well aware of the effects, the way they farm has on the farm environment and beyond the farm boundary, along with the growing requirement by customers for high standards in all areas of their businesses.

I support other proposed changes put forward by Beef + Lamb and Farmers for Positive Change.

Thank you for the opportunity to present today.

Tim Hale