

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**

Submitter **Mathew Sherriff**

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

Name: Mat Sherriff

Address: 609 Mangaotaki Road

R.D. 1

Piopio

Farm: 1150ha 890ha effective Sheep and beef breeding/fattening.

300ha my wife Kim and I own

500ha Family land which we lease and are in the process of purchasing.

350ha of Long-term Maori Lease land

260ha is in retired native bush, wetlands, and exotic plantations

164ha Class 7

227ha Class 6

226ha Class 5

282ha Class 4

We farm 3000 ewes, 800 replacement Hoggets and sell 3500 lambs fat. We also have 150 beef cows fattening their progeny, 35 replacement heifers, 100 steers and 600 Friesian bulls which are purchased as weaner calves and finished.

We try our best to farm according to the class of land matching the right class of stock to the right class of land. With cattle on the better class 4 & 5 land and the sheep on the class 6 & 7 land.

We have been farming here for 7 years, with the home farm being in my wife's family for 77 years. Before farming here, I was farming on my family farm in Arohena on the banks of the Waikato river at the south end of lake Arapuni for 9 years. I have grown up in a farming environment.

My wife is a dentist and we have recently set up a dental practice in Piopio reaffirming our commitment to our district.

Personally :

King Country River Care	- Current
Mangaotaki River Care Sub Catchment Chair	- Current
Board of trustees Piopio Primary Deputy Chair	- Current
Waitanguru Hall Committee Member	- 2013 - present
Waitanguru Hall Treasurer	- 2013 - 2017
Waitanguru Hall President	- 2016 - 2018
School rugby and touch coach	- 2015 - present

My wife Kim and I farm in the west coast catchment 5 minutes from the town of Piopio. Kim grew up here and went to Piopio Primary and Piopio College. We are both very passionate about our little town and want to see it prosper and continue to grow into the future.

While we do not directly farm any land in the Waikato Waipa catchment my parents and brother do. We are concerned at the precedent this Plan will set for any future plans made for the West Coast catchment.

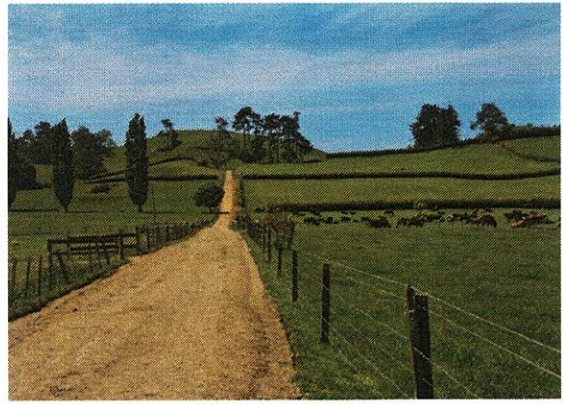
During the CSG process I went along to a few meetings, to hear about the updates on where they thought the process was heading. I came away from these meetings feeling reasonably relaxed and that they were on the right path to which some fair and equitable solutions would be made. How wrong was I.

I feel that the CSG process got Hijacked by paid professionals lobbying on behalf of their sector with all their financial might behind them. Apart from the one lone sheep and beef voice there was very little direct farmer input. This is probably more a black mark on the sheep and beef sector for being so naive, than the other sectors getting organised. It did however lead to some perverse outcomes and a plan that is NOT FAIR, NOT EQUITABLE, and above all else NOT WORKABLE.

The perverse outcomes that came about from the CSG process and the unworkable Plan change 1 that followed, lead us to form King Country River Care. First off to become a voice for our area and fight back against the unrealistic rules and goals. This has led us to morph into a catchment group. With the goal of setting up many sub catchment groups led by local farmers who want to take charge of their problems and make a difference. No one can solve an on-farm problem, quite like a farmer and no one knows how to farm their farm the best way better than a farmer.



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Farmers learn best from farmers. Each farm has its own characteristics and challenges. No two farms are the same. This makes it extremely important to delve into the sub catchment approach and find out what the issues are for each sub catchment. Then work out what the best ways for that sub catchment to mitigate those issues.

During the many meetings King Country River Care has held with countless farmers over the last 2 years the most commonly asked question is, what are the issues with my water? A good starting point could have been to spend the money on showing and explaining to farmers what their water quality is, then ask them what mitigations could they do to improve this? I still believe that this is very important, as farmers need the starting point information in order to show gains. It is important for each Sub Catchment to take ownership of their own issues.

It is important to remember that most dry stock farms are working well within their limits. They do not use a great deal of nitrogen fertiliser, or purchase in large quantities of feed. They farm to the pasture growth curve, sell stock when they are in deficit and purchase back in when they are in surplus. We as a general rule and also some dairy farmers, do not have issues with nitrogen, mainly due to our lower stocking rates. We do however have issues with sediment loss and E. coli, due to our steeper terrain and the high mobility of sheep poo.

It is therefore unnecessary to impose a nitrogen reference point on these farmers. All this does is restrict our ability to farm to the pasture growth curve and make money when the sun shines, or in this year lose money when it shines too much. All a nitrogen reference point does is reward high emitters and penalise the low. It is open to gaming and does little to improve environmental outcomes. Also, the use of *Overseer* as regulation tool is not what it was designed for.

A more equitable solution could be to undertake a Farm Environment Plan (FEP) for each farm. Then work out what areas are working well, what are our critical source areas, and what on farm activities can we do to improve these.

It is also important to remember that with all the current talk around becoming carbon neutral. Many of our on-farm fencing and tree planting plans, now need to consider this.

The current rules around fencing all wet areas up to 25 degrees are ridiculous, unnecessary and unachievable. There is also a lot of uncertainty with the rules only covering 10 years in an 80-year plan, with no account for future carbon neutral requirements. If we as farmers are going to spend large amounts of capital on fencing works, we are going to need certainty that the goal posts won't change in 10 years' time.



This is the last major critical source area on our farm. We have budgeted to address this area next year. When we first looked at this area 4 years ago, when we did our FEP after purchasing the farm. The plan was to stabilise the hill with some poplar poles, put a sediment trap at the base of the hill and fence off the swamp. This is still a good plan. Now with the increased talk around carbon, we are revisiting this option and are looking at options around retiring the entire area and planting in a mixture of native and exotic trees. I am sure there will be plenty of these conversations happening on farms over the next few years. If we had been made to fence the entire wet area and then a few years later found that we now had to plant it all, to mitigate for carbon we would have wasted a lot of money with regards to the fencing.



The photo on the left is a stream running through some of our bull country, it was fenced off 3 years ago and the photo taken after 200ml of rain in the middle of winter. No planting has been done yet. This is an example of where fencing works and is important.

The photo on the right shows another area of our farm. Running through the middle of the photo on the flats is a stream that is not fenced. It runs both above and below the ground. The area is very rocky and challenging. The stream is of similar quality to the photo on the left and I drink out of it often when mustering. This is because the paddock is managed differently with sheep only for 9 months of the year and cows in the summer months to clean the pasture. Under the PC1 rules I would have to fence this for no gain. It is also an area that could be used in years to come for carbon mitigation and retire and plant.

My point is a one size fits all approach will not work.

I grew up on the western bays of lake Taupo where my Parents bought a small rundown block and worked to improve and expand this. We, as a family, spent as much free time as we could, in the lakes and rivers around the area. Whether it be water skiing on lake Whakamaru, swimming in the Mangakino stream, just exploring some bush creak, or chasing Kura for the pot. I want my kids and my kids' kids to have the same opportunities and experiences I did. We as a business and I believe the wider farming community are already committed to and are working hard to achieve this.



We all want to see healthy rivers and we do acknowledge that, we in the farming community do have some issues, but these issues are different for each sub catchment. A blanket one rule, to rule them all approach, is wrong and will not work. We CAN fix these, and I believe most farmers are well on the road to doing this.

It is vitally important that the approach needs to be through sub catchments working together and FEP's. Not fencing rules and Nitrogen Reference Points. We need guidance, advice and direction not a big stick.

Thank you for your time.

Mat Sherriff