

BEFORE THE Commissioners Appointed

IN THE MATTER OF Healthy Rivers PC1

STATEMENT OF Reon Verry

Date: 25th March 2019

Reon Verry

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PERSONAL

Chairman King Country River Care

Farmers 4 Positive Change executive

Meat and Wool Delegate Federated Farmers Waitomo Branch

KCRC

King Country River Care is now an Incorporated Society operating in 7 sub-catchments covering the entire Mokau River and Awakino River. KCRC is a community group. KCRC is set up as an umbrella organisation to co-ordinate sub-catchment activity. The committee is comprised of representatives from each sub-catchment.

We have two primary objectives that are interconnected. To promote “on-farm good practice” of sustainable land management principles. This includes identifying good management practice already being done on farms and highlighting this to external stakeholders. Secondly to ensure our regions farmers have a voice and representation in the development of policy.

Initial sub-catchment meetings late last year were attended by 190 out of 250 landowners in these catchments. We have employed a co-ordinator to ensure that momentum is maintained. Over 50 membership forms have been returned, these collect a lot of baseline physical property data so to have this many come back at our busiest time of year is fantastic. We have prepared a strategic plan and an action plan. Education and encouraging FEPs that identify Critical Source Areas are the main focus currently. We are passionate about protecting our communities, improving water quality and believe we can make significant progress while PC1 lies stillborn in the Environment Court.

FARM

I am farming 1370 ha of Sheep and Beef 9km south of Te Kuiti. Our family owns half of a 750 cow dairy farm 5 km north of Otorohanga which has a share-milker on it. Of the Sheep and Beef land:

1200 ha is effective area

45 ha is production forestry

125ha is bush/wetland/riparian areas

420ha of the farm is in the PC1 area, the remainder outside of it in the Mokau River catchment.

I am supportive of freshwater restoration and now have over 16km of fenced waterways after completion of a further 2.2km this summer. I have concentrated this fencing in areas where we run cattle more intensively.

I farm 6000 sheep and 1500 cattle. This equates to 9 s.u. per ha. 55% of the stock units are cattle. We tweak our stock policy according to season and markets. For example 3 years ago we dropped

dairy heifer grazer numbers from 300 head to 150 head. There were three reasons for this. Financially our capital position enabled us to purchase our own cattle, also the cattle we replaced the grazers with provided a better return. The other reason was flexibility, some dry autumns with inflexible grazer numbers were compromising the rest of our sheep and beef system. To maintain the grazers we would have needed to embark on a more intensive supplementary feeding / cropping scenario.

A winter/summer cropping programme is in place to facilitate the removal of beef cows from more vulnerable hill country during the winter months. This allows better management of any sediment run-off risk over the wetter months. It is also part of a pasture improvement programme. The summer crop is a filler as spring re-grassing has proven less reliable over the past decade.

We are a Class 4 N.I. Hill Country farm taking part in the Beef + Lamb NZ Economic Service Survey.

PC1

My involvement with PC1 started in 2014/15 attending Beef + Lamb meetings to be informed of CSG progress throughout the process. The highlight of this time was meeting environmentally motivated farmers who were excited about the opportunities PC1 represented for our sector. Learning early on that grand-parenting of Nitrogen and blanket fencing were not going to be a part of PC1 further stirred hope that the CSG were going to tread a more imaginative path than other Regional Councils had. Hope turned to dust and here we are faced with Grandparenting of N, the bane of environmental improvement everywhere it goes, rewarding pollution and punishing low emitters. We somehow also ended up with some crippling fencing rules that will likely do more harm than good. Our CSG representative voted against some key points in PC1 and this has further galvanised a good proportion of Sheep and Beef farmers to take a dim view of PC1, farmers know a stitch up when they see it. I fear goodwill toward WRC within our sector has been eroded considerably only making the job of implementing whatever PC1 becomes harder. Those keen advocates at the start became F4PC.

Areas I hold concern about are;

1. Economic and Social cost to rural areas, modelling is catastrophic.
2. Loss of flexibility for low emitting systems
3. Grand-parenting of N
4. Blanket fencing
5. Lack of certainty after 2026
6. FEP – needs to be more than just a compliance tool, tailored for CSA and not more than one.
7. Setting off towards a totally unrealistic destination, need a target reset now.
8. Sub-catchment opportunity signalled but missed
9. Too much, too quickly
10. Effects on the mental health of farmers within our communities

PC1 the document is too long, contains too much waffle and it is hard to ascertain exactly which rules are relevant for a person trying to be compliant. A poor example of policy writing in my humble opinion.

As far as the Vision and Strategy goes if it is the “over-arching document” then surely any actions it requires over and above NES for example would be a case of a Treaty Settlement affecting private property. My understanding is that a Treaty settlement is between The Crown and Iwi and does not involve private property rights. I assume any such actions required on private property will be compensated for but I see no mention of this in PC1.

I am concerned that the splitting of hearings into 3 blocks has already discouraged many farmer submitters from taking part in the hearings, this is of concern given the large number of farmers who have made submissions. I am supportive of the approach taken by Beef + Lamb and F4PC.