

PROPOSED WAIKATO REGIONAL PLAN CHANGE 1 WAIKATO AND WAIPĀ RIVER CATCHMENTS



Mandatory questions form for submissions on Proposed
Waikato Regional Plan Change 1 – Waikato and Waipā River Catchments.

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FORM 5, Resource Management Act 1991

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Delivered to	Waikato Regional Council, 401 Grey Street, Hamilton East, Hamilton
Faxed to	(07) 859 0998 Please Note: if you fax your submission, please post or deliver a copy to one of the above addresses
Emailed to	healthyrivers@waikatoregion.govt.nz Please Note: Submissions received by email must contain full contact details.
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YOUR NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS - please ensure these details match those on your original submission

Full name: Suzanne Louise Edmonds

Full address: 141 Hooper Rd
R D 6 Hamilton 3286

Email: sue.edmonds@clear.net.nz

Phone: 8241944 Fax: -

TRADE COMPETITION AND ADVERSE EFFECTS (select appropriate)

- I could / could not gain an advantage in trade competition through this submission.
- I am / am not directly affected by an effect of the subject matter of the submission that:
- (a) adversely affects the environment, and
- (b) does not relate to the trade competition or the effects of trade competition.

PLEASE INDICATE BY TICKING THE RELEVANT BOX WHETHER YOU WISH TO BE HEARD IN SUPPORT OF YOUR SUBMISSION

- I wish to speak at the hearing in support of my submissions.
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JOINT SUBMISSIONS

- If others make a similar submission, please tick this box if you will consider presenting a joint case with them at the hearing.

SIGNATURE OF SUBMITTER - note you can also type your name to certify the above information is true and correct

Signature: Sue Edmonds Date: 27 Jan 2017

Personal information is used for the administration of the submission process and will be made public. All information collected will be held by Waikato Regional Council, with submitters having the right to access and correct personal information.

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SUBMISSION ON

PROPOSED WAIKATO REGIONAL PLAN CHANGE 1 – WAIKATO AND WAIPA RIVER CATCHMENTS

Suzanne Louise Edmonds
141 Hooper Road, RD6 Hamilton, 3286
07 824 1944
sue.edmonds@clear.net.nz

My submission is that:

As a longstanding farming and science writer, a member of the WRC Central Catchment Committee and a rural landowner in the area covered by the Plan Change, I have followed the creation of and progress by the Collaborative Stakeholder Group for its full term. I have attended all of the meetings held for the larger group of interests, and participated in the discussions and proposals put forward at those meetings.

During all of this process I have become increasingly concerned at the effects of the seemingly very narrow terms of reference adopted by the CSG, and its reported refusal to widen those terms of reference to take account of developments occurring in the world, particularly those relating to agriculture. I shall outline these below:

- 1 The final proposal to spread any improvements over a period of 80 years takes no account of climate change developments during that time, or allow for restrictions which may be imposed both nationally and internationally. This despite New Zealand having signed up to reduce its emissions to a level 11% below 1990 levels by 2030.
- 2 The proposal, as I read it, appeared to take no account of any positive things which have formed part of the way farming has been done in recent years, apart from acknowledging the supposed large amounts of money spent by dairy farmers to cope with the effluent from their much increased herd sizes. I gained a strong feeling from the final recommendations that there was an imbalance in the opinions privately held by CSG members, which resulted in more lenient provisions to be made by dairy farmers over the next decade, particularly over the use of urea. The end result was that drystock representatives refused to sign the final document, due to strong feelings of unfairness.
- 3 The fencing of streams and drains has obviously become a bone of contention among all farmers, particularly those with high country land, with many gullies and streams. As is (2) above, no account appears to have been taken of different land types, potential for erosion, or the much more minimal likelihood of beef animals defecating copiously in what, for many, is their drinking water. Not only that, but the criteria for fencing waterways appears to be vague, both in relation to fencing standards and waterway definitions, and reticulation costs in that type of country seems to have been glossed over.

- 4 The matter of soil carbon sequestration or, as is happening to a greater degree in recent years the disappearance of what soil carbon is there, does not appear to have been considered by the CSG. I have attached my recently published article on the effects of urea applications on both levels of carbon loss and pasture growth reduction. This piece reflects my findings from considerable research, both done in New Zealand and internationally. I was appalled to hear that, when one CSG member took information to the group on a non-urea but microbial based fertiliser being made in New Zealand, that the group refused to even discuss it, much less investigate what other options to urea might be available. I have also attached a copy of a poem on soil carbon I wrote recently. There are already soils around the world which have reached such low levels of soil carbon that nothing can be made to grow. As a nation which relies on plant growth for almost all of its economy, surely soil science should be an important issue here.
- 5 A report a few months ago put out by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment on 'biological gases' put forward the view that, as a major cause of New Zealand's contribution to climate change, the more we can do to change this the more credible we shall look internationally. Since then I have supplied the Commissioner's office with papers and data which had not been previously supplied to her, and had a most favourable reception from them.
- 6 I agree, to a point, with the proposal to stop land use change forthwith. However, again it was dictated in a way which took no account of beneficial changes which had been and would be undertaken by farmers, such as retirement of land for manuka or forest blocks. Surely this could have been more tactfully written, despite the pleas for urgency expressed by CSG members at various meetings.
- 7 The Hauraki iwi lack of consultation was a horrendous mistake, demonstrating the narrow viewpoint and depth of knowledge by those who should have known about what might happen. The iwi concerned had already been embroiled in something of a land grab in the Bay of Plenty, so could have been expected to try to put a spanner in the works of any plan change covering contested land.
- 8 A plan change proposal which contains all 'sticks' and no 'carrots', and for which any water quality improvements will only be seen far into the future, was bound to be seen as contentious. People, both urban and rural, need short and long term goals to aim for, using a broad thinking about more than a couple of rivers. As this submission has described, the timeframe is much too long, the findings are rather biased, and a wider perspective which takes into account potential alternatives and systems has not seemed to be used by this group.

Attached: Article published in Coast & Country January 2017, and 'Unnoticed Theft' poem composed by the submitter.

I wish to speak at the hearing in support of my submissions.

Sue Edmonds

4 Jan 2017

THERE'S NONE SO BLIND.....

Sue Edmonds

For Coast & Country Jan 2017

Often, these days farmers must feel as though the primary sector is being castigated for all the problems in the world – dirty water, climate change, intensification, and too many animals.

Of late I've been inundated with reports on biological gases, riparian margins, soil mapping, soil carbon, environmental sustainability and more. And in the Waikato dairy and drystock farmers are going to war over proposed regulations on fencing and fertiliser use to clean up the water. All carefully researched and written, but seeing each problem as a separate issue.

They aren't separate, but just aspects of what I see as one big problem, the overuse of nitrogen fertiliser – urea. Like antibiotics and drenches, when chemical N was discovered it was the answer to all our problems. So we leapt into using it, particularly in the mid-1980s when we began to make it in Taranaki, thanks to the discovery of Maui gas supplies.

But like antibiotics and drenches we overdid it, and good old Mother Nature, as ever, allowed her smallest creatures and plants to find ways to defeat human derived inventions. So now we find that resistance to antibiotics and drenches is about to cause major problems, and our soaring overuse of urea (700,000 tonnes last year) is growing ever less pasture (in some places nearly 5 t/ha/yr less).

In addition my reading is telling me that where urea is most heavily used, the organic carbon in our soils is reducing by 1 t/ha/yr, and may have been doing so for 30 years. In 2001 we were told that our soils couldn't hold any more carbon, but what happens when we've depleted it to levels where there is nothing in our soils to hold nutrients, so they go up in the air as gas, or straight through into groundwater.

We need to create humus to create soil organic carbon. But when chemical N is applied to pasture, Nature responds by multiplying madly all the soil bugs which crave carbon, and they busily munch up anything which might, if left alone, form humus.

I have been saddened by the number of farmers who have solemnly told me 'You can't grow grass without urea', and was astonished when told by a senior scientist that 'Mycorrhizae and bacteria in soil are bad, because they mine the phosphorus in the soil'. Well they take it up and pass it on to the plants above them in a usable form, as their role is one of symbiosis, not mining! What do these farmers think is growing all the green stuff not on their farms?

A report from Rabobank recently on the economics of sustainability stressed that our mantra of 'clean and green' may well not be sufficient to give us premium prices for our products in future. Particularly when our increasingly sophisticated overseas consumers really investigate our sustainability criteria for freshwater, pasture growth, supplement use and chemical fertiliser usage.

If nitrous oxide and methane are being cited as contributing more than our fair share to greenhouse gases and climate change, has anyone considered that feeding our cows high nitrogen pasture, which their rumen can't cope with, might just be contributing to the amount of N in their copious urine, and be some of the cause of those methane belches?

To a degree we can blame the way science research is funded these days in NZ. Too high a level of vested interest commercial input has seen a proliferation of experts offering views which agree with that commercial input, and a seemingly stubborn refusal to acknowledge other products from small manufacturers which are created in harmony with Nature, and use Her own creatures to encourage suitable plants to take nitrogen from air and supply it to soils and other plants.

Remember, Nature has a lot to offer humans, but only if we work in harmony with her. Man can find ways to overcome what seem the most important problems we face at any one time, but these must be used in moderation always, and we need to remember that Nature has been around forever and will continue to find ways around any 'fixit' barriers that man puts up.

694ww

UNNOTICED THEFT

Sue Edmonds (Jan 2017)

They are stealing soil carbon while nobody cares
By the grain, like sand, or a tonne a hectare a year
So the pasture grows less and they use more urea.

They are stealing the net which holds the moisture
And the minerals, and feeds the inhabitants
Who feed the plants, which feed the animals.

They are stealing the deep black crumbly stuff
Which Nature has created over millennia
And pretending that their chemicals work the same.

Farmers are buying more urea each year
And told they can't grow grass without it
Not good grass but quick grass they tell me.

They blame the cows for our dirtying streams
Graze too hard and then spread chemicals
Thus humus doesn't stand a chance of forming.

No humus, no carbon made, just more gases
As climate warms from excess carbon rising
Times roll on and still no one takes action.

While commerce scores big profits from urea
Soil carbon dwindles unnoticed and unseen
Our safety net to worldwide food produced.

Someone is stealing soil carbon and I'm scared
With less each year, how many seasons left
Of pasture growth and food to feed us all.

Will we ignore till there is naught to nourish
Our plants and animals, what will humans do
When all carbon in our soil has leached and gassed away.