

To: Waikato Regional Council
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Submission on: Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1: Waikato and Waipa River Catchments

Date: 6 March 2017

Submission by: Chris Falconer

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Background

My family and I are 1st generation farmers having purchased our farm in the Waerenga Valley in 2014. Our goal was to establish it as our home and family farm for the benefit of many generations to come. Our community and the environment in which we live are important to us and we take our responsibility to both very seriously. We have spent over \$200,000 on effluent management, fencing and planting and plan to spend another \$50,000 on projects that will benefit the environment. We operate a low input model with staff, the environment and animal welfare at the heart of our business.

I have been involved as a member of DairyNZ's Farmer Engagement Group since the start of the collaborative process and through this group, have been both informed and helped to inform the Dairy Industry position on PC1. This involvement has also given me an insight into the views of other stakeholder groups, the status of the Waikato River and its catchment and how we all have a role to play in its future.

I support the Vision and Strategy for the restoration of the Waikato, Waipa and their lakes and tributaries. I support the collaborate approach to arriving at a set of values and the necessary changes to give effect to the Vision and Strategy. There are however several areas of the proposed plan change that give me cause for concern and I wish to participate in the submission and review process.

I understand that our farm is in the area that is currently withdrawn but believe that my submission should be heard as it involves the whole catchment as well as more localised issues.

Submission Summary

“The recognition that the Waikato River is degraded and should not be required to absorb further degradation as a result of human activities” (PC1. Page 8. h). This should be the lens through which all activities are scrutinised. Dairy farmers have made great strides in meeting their responsibilities and will continue to do so under PC1. There are a paucity of rules that apply to other sectors which detail their responsibilities and how they are to be measured.

The values of Wai Tapu, Mahinga Kai and Human Health for Recreation are compromised by the value placed on “assimilative capacity” by Commercial, Municipal and Industrial users. This enshrines a right to pollute in a manner (point source discharge) which is largely responsible for disrupting the community’s ability to interact with, swim in and collect food from, the Waikato River.

At sub-catchment level there is a disconnect between eco-systems, the issues they face and the people tasked with putting plans in place to protect and remedy them. I am in the Waikare and Whangamarino catchments and am of the view that they must be linked and any strategy for one must be sensitive to the other. The vested interests of those who would seek protect and/or fail to tackle introduced species are a major part of what ails our waterways and should have minimal involvement in their care.

1. 3. Part A. Page 15

Use values- Commercial, municipal and industrial use.

I oppose the use of the term “assimilative capacity” or any other description of the desire to continue the discharging of waste to waterways.

Relief sought

Value is deleted and no provision is made for on-going consent to discharge.

Or such other relief that will address the issues raised in this submission

2. Policy 2

Tailored approach to managing diffuse discharges from farming activities.

I support the policy as it is sensitive to variations from farm to farm and does not seek to implement a one size fits all approach.

Relief sought

The provision is retained as written.

3. Policy 8

Prioritised implementation

I support in part provided Whangamarino and Waikare are linked under the management plan and that all point source discharges are deemed to be priority 1 in all catchments.

Relief sought

c. Lake Waikare together with the Whangamarino Wetland.
In addition to priority sub-catchments all point source discharge consents.

Or such other relief that will address the issues raised in this submission

4. Policy 10

Provide for point source discharges.

I support in part as they will require planning and resourcing but I don't wish to see a lack of clear rules and timeframes in place for improvements.

Relief sought

The provision is amended by adding a clause which ensures that the ultimate goal is no point source discharges by 2026.

Or such other relief that will address the issues raised in this submission

5. Policy 11

Offset of effects.

I support in part. Offsets only in place until 2026. After which offsets will only encourage the exporting of problems and could serve to undermine the Vision and Strategy.

Relief sought

The provision is amended by stipulating offsets are only an option during the period of transitioning to zero point source discharge (2026).

Or such other relief that will address the issues raised in this submission

6. Policy 16

Maori land returned under Treaty settlement or jointly owned.

I support. Maori have been disadvantaged through land confiscation and limited access to capital. The opportunity to develop their land should not be impeded by PC1 provided any land use change is compatible with best available practice and does not result in any discharge to sensitive water bodies.

Relief sought

The provision is retained as written.

Or such other relief that will address the issues raised in this submission

7. Implementation 3. 11. 4. 3.

Farm environments plans.

I support in part provided there is scope for recognising new technologies and mitigations.

Relief sought

The provision is amended by accounting for farm and industry scale mitigations which result from new evidence being presented or technology providing alternative mitigations.

Or such other relief that will address the issues raised in this submission

8. Implementation 3. 11. 4. 4.

Lakes and Whangamarino Wetland

I support in part. I would want not just consultation but collaboration with stakeholders in formulating the plan. Introduced wildfowl to be recognised as pests and managed accordingly.

Relief sought

The provision is amended by adding:

- b. ...and stakeholder collaboration.
- d. ...pest weeds, fish and wildfowl...

Or such other relief that will address the issues raised in this submission

9. Implementation 3. 11. 4. 9.

Managing the effects of urban development.

I support in part but am concerned about the lack of rules around urban development and how it may conflict with the Vision and Strategy.

Relief sought

The provision is amended by adding a clause which clearly states that no new point source discharges will be permitted and that no additional loading will be placed on existing point source infrastructure.

Or such other relief that will address the issues raised in this submission

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

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chris Falconer
6th March 2017

Chris Falconer Submission on Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1- Waikato and Waipa Catchments. 6 March 2017.