

Your submission to Clean Water

Clause

What are your thoughts on the proposed swimming targets, for example, on the timeframes and categories?

Notes

The swimming targets under the previous National Policy statement were standards for river health based on scientifically established measures, and the revised targets reflect an inadequate response to the problem of water pollution. The amendments reflect a fairly cynical approach to the issue, and seem to play on semantics. The amended targets certainly do not reflect the wishes of those I represent. The time-frames will allow a significant level of pollution to exist for an extended period, and are not aggressive enough. Categorisation of water courses also means that significant side tributaries can be well outside acceptable levels, and many regular swimming holes will not be subject to the standards. As a Teacher of Outdoor Education I need to assess the risk of harm to my students in outdoor activities, and the amended targets leave me with a low level of confidence that a class of students will emerge from a river activity without exposure to harm. We will further alienate our emerging generations from the environment by having to keep an eye on regional council advisories before entering the water.

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What do you think about the proposed amendments to the Freshwater NPS?

Notes

The Freshwater improvement fund seems to be funded from general taxation. There is a strong argument that the industries producing the pollution should also be levied to provide further funding for mitigation measures. \$100 million seems to be a fairly modest amount given the scale of the problem, and the impact of pollution on our economic benefits from freshwater, including our 'clean, green' image.

Clause

What are your thoughts on the proposed stock exclusion regulation, for example, the timeframes and stock types to be excluded?

Notes

I believe these timeframes are not assertive enough. The Fonterra clean streams accord has been in place for over a decade, as still does not have 100% compliance. Industry self regulation has not been sufficient to protect fresh water, and reported abuses of the accord indicate that a much firmer stance is required to achieve effective freshwater targets. There seems to be no mention of riparian planting and protection, and this seems to target direct pollution, but not the effects of surface run-off. Other Agricultural sources of pollution, particularly nitrates, include fertiliser application and run-off from both sheep operations and arable farming. These significant elements of the agricultural sector are not included in the mitigation measures, but Riparian planting would be effective for these sectors.

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Do you have any other comments on the contents of the Clean Water discussion document?

Notes

The entire water system is under pressure from the effects of climate change, and increased drought on the eastern plains will place pressure on water retention in soil and aquifers and allocations of water will undoubtedly compound this. A planting programme along water ways - including those of less than 1m - will assist in retaining moisture by providing shade and shelter to soils. Mass clearance in order to create dairy pasture has removed a significant amount of vegetation from these eastern plains and this can only compound the problem of water retention and run-off of nutrients. Encouraging planting along fence-lines, and between centre-pivot irrigator circles could both assist in retention of moisture and reduction in nutrient run-off. Mitigation of freshwater pollution should also focus on the issue of nutrient run-off and leaching.

You have elected to withhold your personal details from publication.