

Your submission to Clean Water

Lisa Ellis

Clause

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

Notes

The swimming targets are a good thing, but too slow and too weak as they are now. We should accelerate the move to 80 and 90 percent swimmability and pay more to do that. The benefits should far outweigh the costs, since tourism, ecology, and human health will all benefit. There should be firm targets and deadlines for the regions to report to the national government, and consequences for failure to meet these targets and deadlines.

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

Notes

The proposed amendments are a good start, but they need to be revised as follows. First, best practice for streamside farms includes not just fencing but planting. We know we have to plant a lot more trees to achieve water quality, carbon capture, biodiversity, and recreational goals. It doesn't make sense to leave this until later because it will be much more expensive to make a fencing change now and a riparian planting change later. Second, the national targets must have the force of law and be independently enforceable through the Environment Court. If you look at other countries' similar efforts, you will see that only those policies for which independent third parties had standing actually got enforced. For example, in the United States, after the Endangered Species Act was revised to reduce litigation in the 1980s, those policy areas protected from outside enforcement were ineffective (habitat conservation plans for example), while those subject to third-party enforcement worked (critical habitat designation, for example). This is not to impute bad faith to anyone, least of all the farmers. It is just a political fact that distributing responsibility across central government and civil society works better than expecting central government to withstand pressure from short-run interests with no assistance. Third, all waterways and not just large ones should be subject to hard targets. Fourth, the contrast implied between economic and clean-water interests is unscientific and inaccurate. The short time frame chosen to measure economic benefit and the decision to exclude externalities like the costs of pollution to human health and tourism are both arbitrary and should instead be selected carefully to reflect the government's responsibility to shepherd New Zealanders' total well being over this and the next generation at least.

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

Notes

The new exclusion regulation is a big improvement over the status quo, but it is still too weak to provide clean water for New Zealanders. There need to be hard targets without loopholes for the councils to enforce and report on to the center at regular intervals. We should absolutely not move to shed dairying as a response to these new demands for water quality. Instead, we need to be creative about sustainable dairying while retaining the great advantages New Zealand has over its competitors in terms of clean and green agricultural and recreational opportunities.

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

Notes

Thanks for moving this critical process forward.