



11 April 2017.

Hon. Nick Smith
Clean Water consultation 2017
Ministry for the Environment.

Dear Minister,

Clean Water consultation 2017

Federated Mountain Clubs

Federated Mountain Clubs was founded in 1931 and advocates for New Zealand's backcountry and outdoor recreation on behalf of 20,000 members. All members have interest in the high health of upper catchments for their ability to provide drinking water and for their amenity value. Some members, such as canyoners and rafters, use water directly recreationally in those places, and others have direct recreational interest in lower catchments.

National Policy for Freshwater Management

The following are general statements whose advice applies to the whole Clean Water document and the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management. They may be repeated in relation to specific points in Clean Water.

The document is predicated on continuation of the present model of prevalent intensive pastoral farming - especially dairy - and doesn't imagine a future in which other land uses - primary or value-added - may proliferate and/or replace that model. FMC considers this a limited approach that will, inevitably, see the NPSFM and related planning become irrelevant and, moreover, incapable of responding appropriately when significant change in land use does take place. For example, growth of the process vegetable or small seed sectors would introduce significantly more

fungicides and insecticides into the environment than are used at present. The NPSFM should be capable of responding appropriately to developing freshwater issues.

Everything in the natural environment is connected. FMC is concerned that this document does little to help the NPSFM support whole-environment health, that its parameters are too narrow to allow it, and that it tends to a too-simple view of water quality. For example, in states of strong natural biological diversity, many waterbodies would be unsuitable for swimming, yet would support high health in much of the natural environment linked to them, including people. It is important that the NPSFM recognises the complexity of freshwater - and whole-environment - health.

Our submission should be read in the context of the following statements and FMC would like to see them incorporated into all relevant parts of the NPSFM:

- * *Preparedness for emerging contaminants and other environmental stressors should be established.*
- * *Freshwater environments' complexity and interconnectedness with the whole natural environment - including people - should be emphasised and protected.*

1. 90% of rivers and lakes swimmable by 2040

FMC's view is that the range of non-natural physical, pathogenic and chemical pollutants that could be found in waterways should be tested for regularly, not just E.coli in rivers and toxic algae in lakes. FMC sees the simplicity and calibration of Clean Water's 'swimmability' as insufficient to allow safe actual swimmability to be identified reliably. Standards should be set to health guidelines determined by independent specialists.

What Clean Water proposes is based on a dairy-dominant model of pollution that ignores potential for widespread change in the primary sector. Grand-scale irrigation and contamination caused by ruminant animals' excreta may not be the main problems in the future. Non-swimmability caused by non-naturally-occurring substances will change over time as land use changes. Mechanisms that allow timely identification of emerging contaminants, and their control and monitoring to regimes set by independent specialists, should be embedded here.

Recommendations:

- * **that independent specialists determine swimmability standards.**
- * **that capacity to appropriately identify, control, and monitor emerging contaminants that may cause unswimmability be built into the NPSFM.**

2. Better information on water quality for swimming

“Better information” is a good concept, but only if data that express the fullness of the situation in waterbodies are gathered and published; these should be determined by independent specialists covering biological, microbiological, physical, and chemical aspects of freshwater and human health science.

To ensure ‘better information’ remains ‘better’ over time, the concept should be constructed so that emerging stressors are recognised and included in information-gathering and publication regimes.

Recommendations:

- * that multidisciplinary independent specialists determine what constitutes good information, be enabled to gather it, and make it readily available.**
- * that the concept of ‘better information’ enable capacity to recognise, assess, and publish information about emerging threats to swimmability.**

3. Amending the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014

3.1 Swimming and recreational values

Making it explicit that regional councils must improve suitability of waterbodies for swimming is laudable, but ‘swimmability’ needs scope for consideration of all factors - biological, microbiological, physical, and chemical - that can reasonably be expected to affect the variety of situations present in New Zealand’s waterbodies.

3.2 Monitoring macroinvertebrates

Macroinvertebrates should be monitored; this should be against baseline data as determined by multidisciplinary independent specialists.

3.3 Maintain or improve overall water quality

FMC supports this. Measurement should be against relevant present and emerging indicators, which should be determined by multidisciplinary independent specialists.

3.4 Managing nitrogen and phosphorus

FMC supports managing for dissolved inorganic nitrogen and dissolved reactive phosphorus in relation to periphyton management. Concentrations should be determined by a consensus of multidisciplinary independent specialists.

3.5 Economic well-being

If establishing environmental limits can be abrasive to economic well-being, as appears to be implied in Clean Water, then aspects of primary industries that are compatible with environmental well-being need to be developed. This should not be left to regional or other bodies or the market.

Responsibility for making environmental well-being possible should lie at the level its order came from.

FMC agrees that “regional councils must consider the community’s economic well-being” in matters concerning water and expects that, as part of the economic aspect of freshwater’s use, externalities, which will be borne by the community, will be thoroughly independently assessed and publicised.

3.8 Te Mana o Te Wai

This is a worthy concept which should be adopted; it is, however, simply a part of the broader concept of Te Hauora o Te Taiao, which also should be adopted as a matter for regional councils’ consideration.

Despite FMC’s above position, we believe making the words reality may be difficult. The NPSFM may be too focussed on individual parts of a ‘big picture’ rather than a whole-environment approach for either Te Mana o Te Wai or Te Hauora o Te Taiao to be put into play. It is in a spirit of optimism, therefore, that we support adoption of both as matters for regional councils’ consideration when giving effect to the Freshwater NPS.

Recommendations:

- * that the concept of ‘swimmability’ have scope for consideration of all factors that may be reasonably expected to affect individual waterbodies.**
- * that macroinvertebrates be monitored against baseline data as determined by multidisciplinary independent specialists.**
- * that maintenance or improvement of overall water quality be required, with measurement regimes to be determined by multidisciplinary independent specialists.**
- * that management of DIN and DRP be linked to periphyton management, with regimes to be determined by multidisciplinary independent specialists.**
- * that primary industries that are compatible with environmental well-being be enabled; this will entail action beyond the Ministry for the Environment.**
- * that externalities be thoroughly assessed, and published, as part of regional councils’ consideration of communities’ economic well-being.**
- * that Te Mana o Te Wai and Te Hauora o Te Taiao be adopted as considerations for regional councils.**

4. Funding to improve fresh water

This proposed funding has potential to be very positive if decision-making has independent multidisciplinary specialist oversight and is linked to broad-picture prioritising. The way should be clear for funding to go to the best projects, which may not necessarily be the most articulate or superficially well-organised.

Recommendation:

*** that funding be established, that decision-making is by multidisciplinary informed and qualified independent specialists, and that the support goes to projects likely to achieve the most environmentally significant outcomes.**

5. Keeping stock out of waterways

FMC supports the concept in general. Riparian buffers, planted with naturally locally-occurring species, should be required and their extent should be dependent on land type and use. These refinements should be determined by multidisciplinary independent specialists.

Recommendation:

*** that the proposal be adopted as detailed above.**

6. Future work programme

6.3 National Science Challenge - Our Land and Water

A major challenge that should be adopted is the thorough investigation of emerging contaminants, for example, synthetic and other chemicals used industrially and agriculturally. Workstreams should include: study of their use profiles; their degradation pathways in the range of conditions nationwide; their effects on environmental and human health; and interactions between substances, and 'cocktail' effects on environmental and human health.

A further challenge should be development of means of remediating historic sheep dip and contaminated stock pit sites. This may include development of biochar remediation.

FMC agrees that designing effective collaborative processes is a worthy aim; part of the project should be to engage a thorough, independent review of New Zealand collaborative processes practised to date.

Recommendations:

*** that the above National Science Challenge proposals be adopted.**

B. Water quantity Objective B1

The change proposed, the addition of "while providing for economic well-being including productive economic opportunities", puts diffuse, often intangible, long-term environmental good in direct tension with superficial and - with no requirement to consider externalities at all, one-sided - pro-development economic narrative. The extreme dissimilitude of these values means they cannot in

any fair way be compared or weighed against one another. Therefore, FMC's position is that the proposed addition should not be adopted.

Recommendation:

*** that the proposed addition to Objective B1 not be adopted.**

Yours sincerely,

J R Finlayson,
vice-president and water spokesperson,
Federated Mountain Clubs.

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