Your submission to Action for healthy waterways – consultation

Steve Gerard (Trustee), Future Rivers Trust (Steve Gerard (Trustee))

Reference no: 1264

Submitter Type: Unspecified / Other

Clause
Proposals as a whole - please refer to questions 1-3 on page 19 of the discussion document

Notes
Yes we believe that the proposals will stop further degradation and start to improve waterways in time - however, we note that more could be done sooner in with some careful planning, for example, one degraded small river in our area could be improved tomorrow (the infrastructure is largely in place) if there was a will to do so. Because of intensive farming the stream suffers from a lack of flow and high nitrates. It's been observed that as irrigation has become more efficient that water has been freed up. However despite this streams plight, instead of using the freed up water to address the environmental issues, the water has instead been used to extend the amount of irrigated land. This is the Hinds River in Mid Canterbury, the Canterbury Water Management Strategy's (CWMS) ZIP for the Hinds area called for the investigation of augmenting this stream, an initial trial was carried out, maybe even prior to the ZIP, the trial findings recommended further investigations but nothing of significance has occurred. There are reports available on this. Notably the infrastructure that allowed the trial to occur is in place, so in theory, the tap could be turned on tomorrow allowing the stream to flow, the nitrates to be diluted, and the fish to return. Of course there are issues that would need to be over come to allow something like this to happen, but what I am trying to say is that where efficiency gains frees up water, and there are environmental issues cause by intensive land uses within that catchment, then that freed up water should be used to address those issues first, before it can be used to increase the intensive activities that caused the environmental issues in the first instance. In fact I believe that all future irrigation developments should be designed to produce a win win type scenario were meaningful environmental gains are factored into such a scheme. I suggest that meaningful gains as outlined above could be attained in a relatively short time frame, they could be held up as examples of real progress, where the agricultural community could take a lot of credit for letting this happening and win back a lot of public good will. Which would also reflect well on the overall policy with real gains being achieved.

Clause
Impacts and implementation - please refer to questions 4-6 on page 19 of the discussion document

Notes
We are a small organisation, and have struggled to make any headway in Mid Canterbury, the domination of the CWMS zone committees with industry insiders has meant they are largely a farce, zone committees need to representative of the community, be unbiased, and should consult with industry, but not be run by industry. Other Govt organisations need to have an open door, and be prepared to work with the community to achieve these policy goals going forward, and that hasn't always happened in this area. There is a very obvious risk, and that is the decision makers will be swayed away from making the correct decisions on this policy by the incessant scaremongering from some from within the agricultural community. I would urge science and the truth to be the winner, this opportunity is unlikely to come again, it is very important to get it right first up, these issues have been known about for a long long time, and those making the loudest noise I would suggest are the ones who have chosen to ignore those very issues, and need to be pulled into line.

Clause
Water commission and other comments - please refer to questions 7-8 on page 19 of the discussion document

Notes
Yes a Water Commission would have my support

Clause
Immediate action to reduce nitrogen loss - please refer to questions 58-64 on page 80 of the discussion document

Notes
I back firm restrictions on nitrogen losses, not just in high nitrate areas, but in all areas.

Clause
Excluding stock from waterways - please refer to questions 65-68 on pages 80 and 81 of the discussion document

Notes
Yes all stock needs to be fence out of waterways, particularly beef cattle and cows, this includes all smaller waterways and wetland areas.

Clause
Controlling intensive winter grazing - please refer to questions 69-70 on page 81 of the discussion document

Notes
Intensive winter grazing were there is a risk of run off entering a stream should not be allowed.