New Zealand is blessed with astonishing beauty, natural resources and clean and abundant water. Our environment is the envy of other nations (and the source of our tourism industry), but we are systematically destroying it.

We cannot continue to trash our waterways for short term economic gains. Beyond the broad societal benefits of a healthy and flourishing environment, New Zealand’s long term economy, both tourism and industry, ultimately depend on the health of our environment.

It’s time that we as a nation take firm action.

We need proper safeguards to protect our waterways from further pollution and exploitation, so they are safe for swimming, fishing and gathering food. I need this, my family needs this, and the future generations of New Zealanders need this.

I want effective rules which protect the environment and every New Zealander’s right to clean water.

Those rules need to be appropriately enforced by central and regional government because, at the moment, many regional councils are failing us.

The Action for Healthy Waterways documents are an essential step in the right direction – but only if the right options in the consultation document are chosen.

It is vital that the Government holds firm on imposing regulation, and does not fall back to an industry self-regulation model. Industry self-regulation has, to date, fundamentally failed to protect our waterways.

More oversight and regulation, as proposed in this freshwater package is required to restore the health and vitality of New Zealand’s freshwater.

I submit that the definitions of ‘current water quality’, ‘existing water quality’ and ‘maintain water’ should refer to water quality as it existed in 1991. Since 1991 regional councils have had the job to maintain water quality under the RMA and we should not permit their failures over the past 28 years to shift the baseline of water quality. Councils should already have data on the state of freshwater in 1991 If they don’t, then their communities -will be all too willing to remind them what their rivers, lakes and wetlands looked like 28 years ago.

Trout and salmon are valued species for a huge number of New Zealanders. They provide an incredible recreational resource and support a thriving tourism industry, as well engendering significant environmental advocacy. The protection afforded to the habitat of trout and salmon under s7(h) is a matter that all decision-makers must have particular regard to. The draft NPSFM needs to make more specific recognition of trout and salmon to ensure this valuable resource is properly provided for.

Finally, I welcome the proposed nitrogen limits (DIN). For the first time the national bottom line is to
be set at a realistic level to support a healthy ecosystem. The new attributes (indicators of ecosystem health) to be monitored and maintained or improved are welcomed.

I respectfully request that you take my concerns, and the concerns of the majority of New Zealanders’, to heart and provide the strong leadership necessary to protect our national treasures.

You are fighting for all Kiwis, including future generations, who want these taonga - our freshwater and environment – properly protected.

Yours sincerely,