Your submission to Action for healthy waterways – consultation

Robin Gunston, Waikanae ki Uta ki Tai (Robin Paul Gunston)

Personal details removed

Reference no: 178

Submitter Type: NGO

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

Notes
WkUKT is a collaborative entity between the entire community surrounding the Waikanae River and the Dept of Conservation. It has been mandated by the Minister of Conservation to manage and improve the ecological health of our awa. These proposals are entirely consistent with our aims, methods and objectives to achieve our end goal- except we believe it will take 3-4 generations to undo the damage done since human habitation came to Aotearoa. Hopefully we will notice a change of attitudes amongst our population in the next 5 years. but within a generation we believe that the best we can achieve is a halt to degradation and some much tighter regulatory control over water usage and discharges.

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

Notes
We take heart from these proposals and would like assistance from the Government to help us educate all our various catchments about these proposals and the effect on them. We know our community best but with a generic education toolkit that specifically aims at schools, householders, commercial enterprises and building developers we could start the fundamental process of change in attitude that is needed to undertake this massive change. One of the unintended consequences of these changes might be that there is growing enmity toward Maori as they are permitted to have first "cut" in the rights associated with freshwater. We have anticipated this risk and are planning to run "Maori as Allies" workshops with our catchment communities to nip this risk in the bud. The other unintended (or perhaps purposely intended) consequence is the gradual power shift to non regulatory options exercised by a community of interest, that invariably takes away the powers of local Government e.g. to control nitrogen emissions- we are anticipating this in our upcoming whaitua process. There is inherently nothing wrong with this but LG has to be educated in advance of this and permit it to happen- never an easy thing! The RMA changes should permit this to happen as a result of community consultation practise.

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

Notes
As LG often fails to work together for the national common good, then a national Water Body is the logical overall authority to exercise the delegated powers of controlling freshwater quality, from Government. However before this happens one has to look at the total inability of the Electricity Commission to position NZ for long term change to electricity supply and ensure that this is a totally different body with different powers and methods of control. It should have on it a representative of every freshwater body in NZ but none of these parties can be a politician of any hue or position- they have to be proven true carers of their water resource. 50% should be Maori. All of them should pass a test in water science before gaining a position, as this body must be science based in its decision making. It has to be entirely futures focused to see the emergent big picture and manage the long term issues and risks to our most precious resource. Groups that fail to meet their water quality targets should lose representation over time.

Clause
Te Mana o te Wai - please refer to questions 9-12 on page 36 of the discussion document

Notes
Te Mana o te Wai is a huge step forward in NZ's hierarchy of freshwater strategic documents. We support its hierarchy recognising of course that this is going to be an enormous challenge for the different communities of interest to get their heads around, particularly those who feel they have an inalienable right to water for their own use. We think the proposals will have the effect of putting the health of water first but see some conflicts arising around the possible shutting off of water supply or discharges under existing consents in order that the health of the water comes first! It is up to Regional Councils to say if this enables them to implement the policies or not- we feel it gives them clear guidance. A long term vision will never of itself change how the freshwater management occurs, what it does is provide a driving force for communities to hold a council to account to the meeting of the Objectives and measures set on the way to achieving the Vision.

Clause
New planning process for freshwater and redrafted National Policy Statement - please refer to questions 17 on page 36 of the discussion document and questions 40-42 on page 53
Clause
New Māori value and new threatened species values - please refer to questions 13-16 on page 36 and question 22 on page 52 of the discussion document

Notes
We believe that Proposal 2 is the most effective way to get Maori Values embedded in the NPS-FM, i.e. to create a new ‘tangata whenua freshwater values’ category giving them the same priority as ecosystem health and human health for recreation. This will be in line with WkUkT processes and objectives.

Clause
Exceptions for major hydropower schemes - please refer to question 19 on page 36 of the discussion document

Notes
No comment- not relevant to our river

Clause
Nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment attributes - please refer to questions 20-21 and 30-35 on pages 52 and 53 of the discussion document

Notes
Fine sediment and deposited sediment are major issues for our river. There should be absolute values set for both of these that cannot be exceeded at any time. 5 year periods are too late to recover from sedimentation effects, these are often cumulative. If ecosystem health measures do not reach the required targets because of sedimentation then action has to be taken immediately. Standing consents need to exist to remove sediment without impacting on the ecological health of the river.

Clause
Ecosystem health policies - please refer to questions 23-29 on pages 52 and 53 of the discussion document

Notes
We strongly support the proposal to protect remaining wetlands. This is a local habitat that is extremely scarce and is significant in combating loss of biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

Clause
Ecosystem health attributes - please refer to questions 20-21 and 39 on pages 52 and 53 of the discussion document

Notes
No comment

Clause
Swimming - please refer to question 36 on page 53 of the discussion document

Notes
One of our key values is access to healthy water for recreational purposes- if this means key targeted sources of faecal concentration then so be it.

Clause
Flows and metering - please refer to questions 37 and 38 on page 53 of the discussion document

Notes
No Comment

Clause
Drinking Water National Environmental Standards - please refer to questions 43-45 on page 56 of the discussion document

Notes
We support the improvements to the NES. All of our drinking water for our area comes from our river. It is important that a risk based approach is needed upstream of the treatment plant intake. We are concerned about any residual chemicals that cannot be removed at the treatment plant are risk assessed, especially any that can come from forestry and farming related operations.

Clause
Stormwater and wastewater - please refer to questions 46-50 on page 62 of the discussion document

Notes
As with the improvements to the NES a risk management planning approach is appropriate, however together with this is the need for comprehensive automated data collection at the outlets of all consented discharge points where the risk exceeds a moderate level. A national water quality risk standard should be set by the new Water Council so that regional variation is not possible. Such risk management plans should be prepared by qualified risk professionals.
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<td>Restricting further intensification - please refer to questions 51-53 on page 80 of the discussion document</td>
<td>No comment</td>
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<td>Farm plans - please refer to questions 54-57 on page 80 of the discussion document</td>
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<td>Immediate action to reduce nitrogen loss - please refer to questions 58-64 on page 80 of the discussion document</td>
<td>No comment</td>
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<td>Excluding stock from waterways - please refer to questions 65-68 on pages 80 and 81 of the discussion document</td>
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<td>Controlling intensive winter grazing - please refer to questions 69-70 on page 81 of the discussion document</td>
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<td>Feedlots and stock holding areas - please refer to questions 71-75 on page 81 of the discussion document</td>
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<td>Other comments on the proposed National Environmental Standards for Freshwater - please refer to questions 76-78 on page 81 of the discussion document</td>
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<td>Policy interactions - please refer to questions 79-80 on page 101 of the discussion document</td>
<td>The various NPS policies will inevitably interact in distinctive cases and scenarios. At this time the Values of Te Mana o Te Wai and the values of the freshwater catchment groups, like WkUkT, must be the determining factor in a hierarchy of policies as applied in a local context. This will be tested in case law but it should be clear in all the policy framework that such values take precedence over all the layers of NPS-X policies under them. This needs careful framing in law.</td>
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