East Otago Catchment Group Freshwater Submission

We represent a group of, approximately 110 individual community members and farming businesses across the East Otago area.

We collectively impose some of the freshwater proposals.

- We oppose being grand parented in land uses, farming systems and potential discharges.
- We oppose new fencing requirements on lowlands, in hill country.
- We oppose consents for hill country cropping.
- We oppose requirements to measure all emissions with the use of overseer.
- We oppose new compliance costs under the fresh water legislation.
- We oppose a blanket approach. One size does not fit all.

By grand parenting our low emitting predominately sheep and beef farms, in the East Otago Catchment, land holders will be locked into a farming system. We then become unable to change stocking rates and farming practices; here we lose our ability to adapt and diversify.

On our low land finishing blocks we already use as little nitrogen and phosphorus as possible. These rates would be required to decrease even further, penalising us for our current good environmental farming practices.

This proposal leaves sheep and beef farmers stagnant, removing the ability to adapt and change. Add to this increase costs of consents, time lost waiting for consents to be processed, fencing costs and consultant fees, has huge impacts on our business and lives. We oppose the frameworks, rules and standards which will lock in existing land use.

Healthy swimmable waterways are important to all New Zealanders. These proposed reforms and national media coverage give the public the false assumption that water quality is declining throughout NZ. The MFE Environment Aotearoa 2019 report states that 5 out 8 water quality attributes showed a majority of improving trends from 2008 to 2017. The positive changes in industry practice are having a positive effect. The Shag River in our catchment is a great example of this. We have many families whose house and stock water come directly from the Shag River.

A ‘one size fits all’ approach does not work for agriculture in New Zealand. We are an Island Nation, climate and land conditions change from region to region. What works for the North Island will not work for the South Island. A regional approach is necessary. We oppose this blanket approach to holding the line. This will put low input systems under significant financial strain. The cost of compliance and the level of action should be proportional to the environmental impact of the farm on freshwater health.

We as an industry group, are extremely upset that we have been given such a short time to consider the huge impact this new proposed legislation has on our lives and businesses. For this to occur at one of our busiest times in the farming calendar is an outrage. Morale is low in our farming communities.

The idea that farmers are out to receive as much financial gain irrespective of the environmental cost is untrue. Farms across the country have upgraded systems, changed practices, regularly take water samples, have updated Land Environmental Plans, fenced waterways and planted natives. Our Catchment group members are proudly included in this group.
We are deeply concerned about the potential impacts of these proposals on our farms in our catchment group area; especially in the light of the modelling by local government New Zealand which highlighted 68 percent of sheep and beef farms could be unviable under these proposals.

Please reconsider this proposal, and allow sheep and beef farmers to make meaningful and realistic changes to the health of our waterways, without such detrimental impact to families, business and rural communities.

Signed from the East Otago Catchment Group