Essential Freshwater - Action for Healthy Waterways:

Submission from Environs Holdings (Subsidiary of Te Uri o Hau Settlement Trust)

Introduction

Environs Holdings is the environmental arm of the Te Uri o Hau Settlement Trust. Our purpose is to advocate and support Kaitiakitanga throughout the Rohe as well as in the management and development of Te Uri o Hau resources.

Environs and Te Uri o Hau are partner members of the Integrated Kaipara Harbour Management Group (IKHMG) and the Waimā Waitai Waiora and Hoteo project partnerships. These partnerships have as part of their objective the goal of restoring the mauri of waterways in the Kaipara Harbour and catchment. The IKHMG is a partnership of hapu, local and central government agencies, community groups and conservation organisations with the overarching purpose to promote integrated management and inter-agency coordination and kaitiakitanga of the Kaipara Harbour and its catchment. The Waimā Waitai Waiora partnership comprises the Northland Regional Council, Nga Kaitiaki o Nga Wai Māori, Te Uri o Hau, Te Roroa, Living Water (Fonterra and Department of Conservation Partnership), Reconnecting Northland, IKHMG, Sustainable Business Network with the purpose of collectively enhancing the effectiveness of water quality improvement initiatives. The Hoteo project comprises Auckland Council, Nga Maunga Whakahii, Ngati Manuhiri, Te Uri o Hau, IKHMG and Beef and Lamb NZ. Both projects are supported by the Ministry for the Environment. These projects are informed by Western science and Matauranga Maori.

The Action for Healthy Waterways, the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management, and National Environment Standards for Freshwater (NES) are of key importance to Environs and Te Uri o Hau as Kaitiaki in the Northern Kaipara harbour.

General Response to proposals:

Overall the intent of the proposals is good. We are in agreement with the general aims of the new draft of National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM) and the National Environment Standards for Freshwater (NES) in responding to the urgent need for reform of the way freshwater resources are managed in Aotearoa. In particular we support the establishment of the central framework of Te Mana o Te Wai, and the shift toward matauranga based practice and concept in management of Te Wai.

In this submission we have presented our responses according to the numbered section headings and questions set down in the Action for Healthy Waterways discussion document. We have not responded to all questions and issues but rather indicated our support or provided comments in relation to those sections or issues of most direct relevance to Te Uri o Hau as mana whenua.

4.3 Strengthening Maori Values

Q9. We are in support of the use of the Te Mana o Te Wai framework and the 3-tiered hierarchy of obligations:

1. To protect the health and mauri of the water
2. To provide for essential human health needs – drinking water
3. To provide for other consumption provided that such use does not impact adversely on the mauri of the water

Q13. In responding to issues of inadequate representation of Māori values, we support “Proposal 1 Elevate the status of mahinga kai to a compulsory value” as a multi-faceted integrated indicator so that Regional Councils would be required to provide for the mahinga kai compulsory value in waterways. We also support the assertion of Kāhui Wai Māori that it is critical for the success of the mahinga kai value that iwi and hapu are sufficiently supported and resourced to ensure mana whenua values are meaningfully incorporated.

We also support the recommendation by Kahui Wai Māori for the formation of a national body or Te Mana o Te Wai commission with at least 50% of the appointed commissioners being Māori.

5.4 Aquatic life – improving protection for threatened indigenous species

Q22. We support a compulsory value for threatened indigenous species.

5.6 Habitat – no further loss of wetlands

Q25. We support the prevention of further loss of wetlands, and the proposal to ensure regional councils identify all existing inland wetlands, monitor their health, and set policies to protect them. This is because wetlands are such important habitats for biodiversity and because they have been so severely degraded over such a long period.

5.7 Habitat – no further loss of streams

Q27. We support greater protection (avoid infilling, more stringent controls on culverting and diversion) of streams to protect biodiversity and vulnerable habitats and biota.

5.9 Water quality – reducing sediment

We support setting of more stringent limits for suspended sediment for each catchment.

7.4 Stormwater and Wastewater

Q50. Comments: It is important that stormwater and wastewater management measures take into account principles of matauranga. Ideally mana whenua should be consulted and have input at the design stage of wastewater and stormwater networks.

8.0 Improving Farm Practices

Q54 to 56. We support mandatory farm environment plans in principle – but have concerns about resourcing, capacity, implementation and financial strain for some farmers. Who will pay for mandatory FEMPs?

Q65. We support initiatives to incentivise the exclusion of stock from waterways.

Additional Comments:

We see a key challenge to the success of the Te Mana o Te Wai framework as the capacity and ability of Regional Councils and other local government entities to effectively implement the various responsibilities conferred on them by the proposed revisions to the NPSFM and NES Freshwater. It is important that the Te Ao Maori values of Manaakitanga, Kaitiakitanga, and Aroha guide the
development of policies and rules that flow from the Te Mana o te Wai framework. This means that the principles of inclusiveness, equality, generosity, respect, integrity, patience, accountability and transparency are followed. These values and principles underpin the work of the Waimā Waitai Waiora and the Hoteo projects, and offer a sound approach to guide the implementation of Te Mana o Te Wai.

If the improvements to the way freshwater resources are managed through the proposed changes to the NPSFM and NES are to be successful, it will be essential that Central and Local Government entities work in true partnership with Tangata Whenua groups according to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This means walking the talk so that recommendations such as that from Kahui Wai Māori for the formation of a national body or Te Mana o Te Wai commission with at least 50% of the appointed commissioners being Māori are adopted. If there is a true partnership between government and Tangata Whenua in the design and implementation of Te Mana o Te Wai then Tangata Whenua can provide support to enable the rehabilitation and protection of freshwater resources in Aotearoa to be realised.