The Waimatuku Catchment located in Central Southland is made up of 72 members (including 11 committee members) who all farm within the Waimatuku catchment area. We work closely with the ACE Project (Aparima Community Environment – a farmer led group supported by agencies with a vision to build and support the resilience of the Aparima area). Two of our committee members have been appointed to attend meetings and be involved with this organization. The Waimatuku Catchment Group enjoys a strong “working” relationship with our regional councils.

The catchment group realizes the need for significant improvement; we feel however, that picking one single number for the whole country is problematic.

As a collective group we do not agree with the DIN bottom Line proposal of 1mg/L. We would prefer to be treated as an individual catchment, where a farmer driven group, working alongside our regional councils is committed to achieve regionally set targets. A number of variable factors and agricultural sectors within our catchment need to be considered.

**Variable Factors**
The Waimatuku River originates from a peat bog, not from mountains - where potentially large volumes of uncontaminated fresh water come through to help dilute nitrate levels. Large amount of Gorse grow on peat bog. Gorse is known to release significant amounts of nitrogen into the environment, potentially contributing to the catchment’s high DIN levels, therefore making it impossible to achieve proposed national level.

Our climate compared to the rest of the country is a large factor, as certain algae is unachievable from a cooler climate. There is a township within the Waimatuku Stream. There is a lack of testing and historical data to tell us what the levels of nitrogen are at the beginning of the river. Given these factors we believe the proposed DIN levels of 1 are unachievable in particular given the lack of scientific data/evidence as the levels could be much higher at the start of the Waimatuku river.
Testing Requirements
There has been no testing or study done within the Waimatuku River to pinpoint locations of high Nitrate levels, nor testing on the variable factors within our catchment. The data we have seen from Lawa (Land, water and air) data is showing N levels in our catchment are improving. We need more study and testing done to the river for us to be able to achieve lower levels of Nitrate.

Conclusion
The impact of this proposal would be huge on our communities. Adding to already increased stress levels for farmers and putting significant financial pressure on their businesses. We trust you take the time to consider the variable factors outlined and accept more research and testing within our catchment is required before targets are set, given the fact that our starting levels of N mg/L is higher than the national average.

Regards,
Waimatuku Catchment Committee