This is a submission written on behalf of the directors and shareholders of Lock Agri Ltd against the proposed National Environmental Standards for Freshwater Management.

We are a small family farming business in the foothills of Mid Canterbury. All of us have a strong interest in the outdoors, with a main focus on fresh water and salt water boating. For generations we have swam in the river which runs past our boundary and we hope our kids can to continue to do this long into the future.

The proposed documents will take a significant toll on our farming business as it is currently run. This is mainly through the removal of our ability to farm our land as we see fit, matching our soils and climate with current environmental standards to ensure we have a profitable business which has a low environmental impact. The 1mg/l standard will see us having to reduce our stock numbers which will directly reduce our income. Our soils and climate are not fit for growing seed crops so we will be forced to become a very low input and subsequently very low profitability business. This will be evidenced by our reduced spend back into our local businesses which support the agricultural industry.

We value our landscape and environment so we take pride in correctly identifying and selecting the appropriate paddocks for winterfeed. These are paddocks which will not run off into creeks and streams. That have a dry spot for stock to rest on during wet weather events. That have a substantial riparian planting zone to ensure any nutrient is soaked up before it can enter a waterway. We plant catch crops immediately post grazing when the weather allows to capture any free nutrient left from the stock. Our practices are in line with the Canterbury Land and Water management plan which is currently in place. The proposed new regulations will mean we have to reduce our area of winterfeed which will instantly reduce our profit and put further pressure on the business.

The fencing of waterways is one thing we take very seriously. We have spent large amounts of time and money to do this to ensure our stock are kept out. We are in the middle of a planting regime to enhance the natural beauty and wildlife of these creeks.(also keen duck shooters so that helps). We take great pride in the work we have already done and are extremely disheartened to think it may have to be removed and redone at the 5m standard. This will come at a significant cost of time and money. (not to mention the relationship stress of driving posts with family on our rocky country.) We currently have more money in the budget to continue the Riparian planting and restoration work, but this will be reduced as we have to adjust our spending to meet the proposed new regulations.

There is also the problem of cleaning the creeks once the 5m boundary fence is up. We will not be able to get an excavator in to do it, so they will become over grown. Spraying is not an appropriate measure to keep them clean. This will lead to water flooding onto our paddocks and pastures, creating more potential for Nitrogen leaching and Phosphate runoff. This is exactly what we as farmers and what the proposed National Environmental Standards for Freshwater are trying to avoid.
Our greatest fear is that the proposed changes will have a huge impact on our local community. Mid Canterbury has numerous small towns which are heavily reliant on agriculture. If farmers are forced to make hasty changes to their businesses which impact their bottom lines the small communities will suffer the most. Our small schools will be first to go as farming families look to move districts to find more work. Land owners will look to reduce costs and labour units will be reduced where possible. Sports clubs will shrink and then shut down as participation numbers dwindle. Country kids will lose out long term.

“Rural NZ” is what this country was built on. It seems some people have forgotten this.

Lock Agri Ltd, 100% supports and accepts the fact that there can be improvement in freshwater quality and management. But we as farmers and caretakers of the land are already well down the road of achieving significant improvements. We have Farm Environment Plans. We have Nutrient Budgets. We have an achievable goal already in front of us in the Canterbury Land & Water Management Strategy.

The proposed National Environmental Standards for Freshwater is not achievable if the government wants “Rural NZ” to continue to prosper and grow.

Personal
Director & Shareholder
Lock Agri Ltd