1. This is a submission from the Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand on the proposed freshwater package. Federated Mountain Clubs represents over 100 outdoor clubs with a cumulative total of over 22,000 members across New Zealand. FMC was formed in 1931, and has consistently advocated for the sound and wise management of our conservation estate and mountain lands.

2. Much of the area of FMC’s member-clubs interest is public conservation land, which due to its protected status in law retains relatively good ecosystem health, flows, and water quality. It is downstream of the public conservation estate where the problems begin. This dichotomy is of substantial concern to our members – clean water in relatively unmodified catchments above human habitation and production, with increasingly modified, dirty, and disturbed catchments below.

3. This binary approach to catchments has to change, for the intrinsic value of the organisms living in them, and for the human systems that rely on freshwater. The continued degradation of our surface and groundwater cannot continue, and strong, effective science-based regulation is required to achieve this.

4. Thus, FMC strongly supports the following aspects of the discussion document:

   a. The science-based determination of the ecosystem health requirements for surface water as defined in the revised National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management appendices.

   b. The policy framework within the proposed National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management which gives effect to ecosystem health.

   c. The inclusion of all species values as per section 6 and 7 RMA, which includes indigenous and valued introduced species. This also reflects the functions of the Department of Conservation in section 6(ab) Conservation Act.

   d. The rules in the proposed National Environmental Standard which require regional councils to immediately make changes to their regional plans with respect to intensive agriculture.
5. FMC wishes to see changes to the following aspects of the policy proposals:
   
a. The removal of the exemption for rivers with large hydroelectric power schemes on them. The exemption is not needed, as the ability to design specific regimes for highly modified rivers can simply occur through the consenting regime for the hydros, as all hydros must seek consent to operate in some form. If the exemption continues as is, the freshwater proposals will not apply to most of New Zealand’s large river systems, effectively rendering the policy changes useless.
   
b. The amendment to the fish passage provisions to not conflict with the Conservation Act 1987 and Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983 regime for fish passage.
   
6. FMC supports the overall intent of Action for Healthy Waterways. However, there are many more significant provisions it could make and external workstreams it could trigger. Among these are:
   
a. Freshwater planning must allow for the protection and restoration of rainforest and tussockland, and other water-sequestering and -regulating (quality and flow) parts of catchments.
   
b. ‘No further loss of water races’ should be a strong consideration for any area containing these waterways; in fact, it may be as important a conceptual consideration as ‘no further loss of streams’. Many water races have become virtual streams over long periods of time and can be very healthy, or restorable. It must also be considered that in many cases they are ecological backups to nearby naturally-formed waterways.
   
c. This process should prompt consideration of separate processes to address causal aspects of stormwater and waste water issues. For example, these could include restrictions on sale of brake pads other than copper-free pads, planning restrictions on unpainted galvanised zinc roofs, and requirements for after-treatments to restrict polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons’ entry into waterways.
   
d. Conducting external water and sediment testing of all registered drinking water supplies against the Ministry of Health’s micro-organisms, and chemical and physical determinands datasheets, and any other substances recommended as of interest by health or other relevant specialists. Regularity and scope of each supply’s ongoing testing regime should be determined only after initial comprehensive
   
7. Crucially, Action for Healthy Waterways is focussed heavily on remedying familiar environmental harms. However, agriculture and other industry of the future is likely to be very different from what presently exists. This must be planned for as far as possible. It is likely that agricultural land use in times to come (potentially process vegetable production, small seed production, orcharding, horticulture, poultry farming, or niche pastoral farming) will make much greater use of insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides, for example, than are presently used. There is a great deal more work to be done in order to be properly set up for genuinely healthy waterways in the future.

6. FMC does not wish to be heard, if any hearing is convened.
Yours faithfully,

Personal details removed

President