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[withheld]

We tramped the Kauaeranga Valley this year and were amazed to see people swimming all along the river. This is a sight we never see in the Manawatu River due to the sediment and the slimy periphyton on the river bed which makes swimming a health hazard (and dangerous because it is so slippery). The heritage of swimming in rivers and lakes which I enjoyed as a child has been lost for my children and I would like to see water quality standards introduced for NZ that enable recreational swimming in rivers.

Current legislation and 'best environmental practice' has not achieved good outcomes for New Zealand so rules need to be tightened. Scale is an issue. There has been severe degradation of water ways over the last 20 years (Canterbury and Southland in particular) despite known knowledge and science of the impacts of increased intensive agricultural land- use. Now we are struggling with the question of can we, as a country, afford to rectify the damage or do we just accept water quality standards that are below many other agricultural countries in the world (eg Sweden, Denmark).

Water is a scarce resource and needs to be paid for like any other resource extracted from the environment. This money can then be reinvested to protect and maintain water quality and quantity for everyone to enjoy.

The distribution of benefits and costs needs to be taken into account when use of water (as a resource and assimilator of waste) is considered. Currently benefit goes to a small private minority. This is generally justified by the multiplier effect of jobs and income or the so called 'trickle down effect'. It has been proven that vast wealth has to be accumulated by a small minority before the majority of citizens' benefit in this way. The externalities – often on a similar scale to the private benefits - are costs picked up by the public (ratepayers, taxpayers) or as a loss of amenity such as clean water.

The complexity associated with the management of waterways in New Zealand and the climate variations makes the concepts of managing water quality based on whether they are 'phosphate limited' or 'nitrate limited' as foolhardy. Such argument are put forward to justify more pollutants going into waterways with little acknowledgement of unknowns such as the build-up of phosphorous in

sediment which can be released at any time.

When considering water quality, links to coastal environments need to be taken into account. The risk of dead zones at sea increases with the use of rivers and streams as disposal channels for nitrates and phosphates. This is an extreme risk in some areas, for example, Hawkes Bay where five rivers have their mouths in close proximity.

All consumption and therefore economic activity consumes resources and produces waste thereby altering ecosystems. People in NZ need to be made aware that their new iPhone (or whatever imported good they desire) has an impact on the NZ environment as goods need to be produced within the country to pay for such imports. Such trade-offs need to be made with full-understanding of the costs – not based on the assumption that the environment is a free good that can be wasted and spoiled.