

From: [withheld]
To: [WaterReformPublicConsultation](#)
Subject: Proposed "standards" are a disgrace
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Michael Gilchrist
[withheld]

The proposed 'standards' for rivers are a disgrace. They simply license the pollution of waterways by intensive agriculture and inadequate sewage treatment processes and relieve those responsible for those activities of appropriate responsibility for the environment. By doing this we remove the incentive for innovation in those activities and the possibility for new and productive uses of environmental resources in the future. It is not a question of a balance between economic and environmental interests. It is extremely poor economic management just as much as it is environmental vandalism.

Ensuring rivers are clean enough to swim is vitally important in its own right. If our natural resources are not available for common enjoyment and recreational and cultural uses we are effectively being relegated to second class status in relation to the landowners who are given the right to pollute them for their own purposes. It is also, though, a minimum standard at which the ecosystem is properly maintained and at which it can sustain existing and future commercial uses. Those uses include tourism of course but there are myriad of other as yet undreamt of uses that will be foreclosed. It is a shockingly shortsighted approach.

Far too many other recognised water quality indicators are missing from this report. If councils don't have to monitor these indicators then we don't get an accurate understanding of the state of our waterways and can't ensure the sustainability of the ecosystem of which they are a part.

The rules should ensure:

- * water clarity and periphyton cover (a measure of how much algae, bacteria and detritus is covering the river bed) are monitored, to ensure our rivers are safe for swimming;
- * monitoring of aquatic insects to ensure our rivers are healthy;
- * there is a limit on both problem pollutants nitrogen and phosphorus so they don't cause nuisance algal growth; and
- * a limit on sediment to ensure our rivers are healthy.

Any exemptions to the rules should be limited to a list of specific water bodies.

One certain way to help protect our rivers is to ensure that we look after them and that the water is clean enough for swimming, not just wading or boating. Human health and our economy depend on safeguarding our environment.

Michael Gilchrist