

From: [withheld]
To: [WaterReformPublicConsultation](#)
Subject: Rivers are for swimming
Date: Friday, 24 January 2014 5:45:22 p.m.

Janet Salas
[withheld]

In the document introducing the proposed amendments, it is stated that a balance is sought between "insufficient protection for environmental or cultural values, or" .." overly conservative decisions (limits set which unnecessarily constrain economic growth and development".

As soon as "economic growth and development" are offset against environmental protection, the short-term profit argument takes over.

I want New Zealand to protect our rivers and ensure that they are safe, on the basis that the long-term good of the country, its people, flora and fauna, and also the long-term health of the planet, depend on the vital and non-negotiable health of our waterways. We are not just talking about the odd clean bit of river for safe swimming or boating or fishing, it is the whole system that we dare not compromise. Our waterways are our well-being and our wealth, and if we sell them down the river, as it were, we are not only degrading our current environment and everything that depends on it, but also irrevocably destroying future resources. We have no right to do anything except ensure the long-term sustainable health of the waterways in absolute terms and across all parameters, not just a few selected boxes to tick. There are no half-measures. The rewards will be great, and the government that delivers healthy waterways will be remembered for its far-sighted economic good sense.

Ensuring rivers are clean enough to swim in should be part of an absolute requirement for anyone whose activities impinge on waterways, not optional. Councils should not be given discretion in these matters - either the waterways are clean, safe and life-sustaining or they are not.

If rivers are safe for swimming and fishing we can be fairly sure that they are being well looked after. Activities such as wading or boating do not require clean waterways and should not be regarded as indicators. Human health, the health of the natural environment and our economy depend on safeguarding our environment.

Too many recognised water quality indicators are missing from the current proposals. If councils don't have to monitor these indicators then we don't get an accurate understanding of the state of our waterways.

The rules should ensure:

- * that 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;
- * that nitrogen and phosphorus input is kept well below levels which cause nuisance algal growth; and
- * that there is a limit on sediment to ensure our the health of waterways.

There should be no need for exemptions to the rules. Anyone wishing to pollute waterways should be looking at filtration, other procedures or relocating.

Having just hosted relatives from Germany, I am sad to hear confirmed what I

and so many New Zealanders now realise: the "clean, green" image that New Zealand has counted on for many of its major revenue sources is pure only in its falsity. Tourists see through it when they come here, and they will take their impressions back home.

We have unprotected waterways, polluted air, unhealthy houses, poor recycling and a cavalier, pioneer attitude to natural resources which will lose us our major attribute if we do not act now.

Janet Salas