

Dear government of New Zealand,

I know this is a long email. But please take the time to read this.

I am writing to you today with concerns for New Zealand's fresh water. As an avid high country angler, fisherman and proud kiwi, I think there is nothing more important than having the highest quality of water in New Zealand. It's up to you, the government, to implement the changes to successfully save our rivers, lakes and swampland for ourselves and future generations.

I grew up in North Canterbury where the farms changed from sheep and beef to dairy with huge investments on irrigation over the last few decades. Only 14 years ago when I was 10, I would fish my favourite stream sitting in the foothills surrounded by fields of unirrigated beef farms. One weekend I went fishing to see the farmer had 'tried to straighten this winding stream through his farm so it had a more direct route and he could better manage his farm. This destroyed the fishing for a while. But you cannot tame a river. Within 6 months it had returned to its original path. Unfortunately this was the beginning of the farm's transformation to dairy, along with the other farmers along this stream's length. Since then it's been all downhill. The river is unfishable and unswimmable. The trout and salmon no longer spawn here which means the generations of salmon that spawned for the last century have died out. The reason for this is irrigation and fertilizer. The farmers irrigate with fertilizer and it runs off into the stream turning it from a stony bottomed stream, perfect for trout and salmon spawning, into an overgrown weed stream. There's so much weed growing in the stream now it's unbelievable. Some of the farmers helped by fencing the stream off to the cows, which is great but more needs to be done to save this stream. Streams in natural environment have bushes, shrubs and plants on the edges which act as a natural filter for water run off into the stream. These plants will grow great with the 'fertilizer' and then help stop the weed overtaking the stream. More insects (trout food) will return to the stream side too, thus more birds. Which is a great thing!

Some farmers in NZ are great at looking after their land and waterways, others are not. They don't do it but the more they look after water the better it is for them. Higher water quality means more grass growth, more milk production. NZ has farms, a lot and they are not going anywhere. Make the changes so all farms take better care of waterways and provide the rest of NZ with clean, drinkable, swimmable, and last but not least (most importantly for me) fishable.

I have always been concerned for the environment and waterways but have never taken action into my own hands apart from asking farmers to fence off the stream. I am writing to you from the French countryside while travelling. Having seen the rivers in France and Canada I would hate to see NZ end up like them. (No offence France and Canada.) When I come back to NZ I plan to do more.

I'm sorry for this long story but I really hope you take the time to read this.

Kind regards

Dave Stewart

Sent from Samsung Mobile

