

Submission from:

Vera van der Voorden

[withheld]

Water sustains life on our planet. As such Water needs absolute respect. Humans consist of mainly water. If we are forced to consume polluted water our bodies will be mainly polluted. This is no laughing matter.

Clean water ensures the long term survival of human life on our planet.

The national value should definitely not be the secondary recreation standard. Wading and Boating? Is this document suggesting we are to become a nation of people excluded from direct contact with our rivers and lakes?

If you ran a referendum on it, one would find that for the majority of New Zealanders the concept of waterways being swimmable is a super important one. Moreover according to recent surveys, people think that the state of waterways across New Zealand is the country's No 1 environmental challenge.

We live in the Waikato where **75%** of our waterways are already hugely polluted, to the point where some of it is not even fit for animals to drink safely.

These proposed amendments in the document are likely to further entrench the degraded conditions rather than setting up a framework for improvement.

We live on the edge of a river; our property has riparian rights. We would like to be able to enjoy swimming in this river but most days the faecal coliform count is too high for it to be safe for our health.

We run a tourist accommodation facility and refrain our visitors from swimming in this river that looks so inviting and beautiful.

Our tourist visitors are so shocked when we tell them the facts surrounding the state of our Nations' water.

Apart from any form of active protection of this “life blood” in the rural areas, in towns and cities untreated storm water is discharged into streams, rivers and harbours, and in too many cases, even raw sewage. Planners and engineers allow major damage to waterways from earthworks, and bury urban streams underground in drains and culverts – with an out of sight, out of mind attitude. Industrial waste is still dumped in urban waterways. It sure dispels the “New Zealand Clean Green Image”.

This is not acceptable.

We want our rivers and lakes, in fact all waterways to be at least, protected from further pollution; at best, cleaned up.

The compulsory national value for human and ecosystem health should be swimmable rivers.

Where are the real water quality indicators in this document?

We want Water Clarity

And we want Councils:

Actively measuring how much algae, bacteria and detritus is covering the river bed.

As someone who lives by an estuary, we want to see Measures for Estuaries.

Estuaries are vital as fish nurseries and pathways and have important recreational and cultural values.

We want to keep enjoying our whitebait. We want to see native kokopu, long fin eels and other endangered species flourishing not declining.

Our river suffers from the effects of erosion upstream. We want to see a limit on deposited sediment. Sediment smothers spawning areas and habitats.

We need macroinvertebrate monitoring. The presence of freshwater crayfish, snails, worms and insect larvae are a critical indicator of river system health. Without that measure water quality will continue to decline.

The Macro-invertebrate Community Index is a well-used and understood measure of river and stream health to monitor changes in the diversity of aquatic species and insects such as mayflies and caddisflies.

Most of the streams and rivers in the Waikato are not fenced off or riparian planted. Dairy farmers still spray effluent onto land close to streams and rivers. We suffer effluent pollution into river systems by stock trucks emptying their stock effluent tanks directly into the rivers, and soapy dairy shed rinse water reaching the rivers and streams. We need better monitoring and strong discouraging penalties.

The proposed bottom line for nitrate is at a level where it is toxic to fish and other aquatic life. This is not acceptable.

We want to see a limit on nitrogen and phosphorus nutrients entering our rivers.

We do not want nuisance algal blooms. We want strong and improved National Environmental standards to control intensive land use and nutrient leaching.

We want a measure for dissolved oxygen across a river, not just in relation to point source discharges. Dissolved oxygen is critical for life and can vary hugely between day and night.

Furthermore of concern is that there appears to be no intention to adopt limits for trace toxic contaminants (e.g., heavy metals, arsenic and organic contaminants) for ecosystem health. Given the growth in number of geothermal power plants (usually built close to rivers), this surely needs addressing?

Diffuse sources of these types of contaminants have a significant impact on the ecology of waterways in urbanised, mineralised and geothermal catchments, and are not currently effectively controlled. This is not acceptable.

There is urgent need to create enforceable national environmental clean water standards which set out areas of responsibility.

The proposed changes to the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management are inadequate to do any of the above.

It is imperative that strong regulations be put in place to improve and protect water quality.

Prevention is better and less expensive than cure.