

Submission on National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management

Submitters Liz Weir & Colin Morris

Address: [withheld]

We live in Canterbury and spend a great deal of our spare time in the outdoors. We are keen trampers and walkers and New Zealand's abundant rivers are of great significance to us as individuals. We have appreciated the unique and precious resource provided by our (until recently) clean rivers, and wish to see future generations have the same privilege.

It is pleasing that a National Policy Statement is being devised but we believe the policy lacks teeth. The 'bottom lines' will be entirely useless, unless the NPS-FM also incorporates 'bottom lines' for the alarming increase in intensive land use. It is not possible to '*establish ecosystem and human health as compulsory values in regional plans*', while the dairy industry is allowed to pursue unfettered growth. Much of the damage has already been done. Over-allocation of water resources has led to future takes being locked up and 35 year consent periods ensure that irrigators will continue to pursue intensive land use practises 'while the going is good'.

In Canterbury, our water bodies are suffering badly from consented, intensive dairy farming practises on wholly unsuitable land. We have watched helplessly over the past 15 years as the water quality in our rivers, lakes and streams has plummeted rapidly and the health of our drinking water supplies declines.

Swimming in our local river The Waikirikiri/Selwyn was a pleasure for us but one that has been denied us since the advent of toxic algal bloom in our river every year. We are concerned that the NPS-FM does not include swimming and other water contact

sports as activities, which should be possible in all rivers and streams. Having a standard that allows for 'boating and wading' only and not swimming is not good enough. All rivers and streams in New Zealand should have to meet criteria that would allow for safe swimming. This can only be achieved if the NPS-FM incorporates bottom lines that curb more intensive land use and prohibit further pollution from dairy farming practices. This is the elephant in the room.

The Canterbury irrigation company, Central Plains Water Ltd., is gearing up to irrigate a further 30,000 hectares of land between the Waimakariri and Rakaia Rivers. Nitrate levels in many wells and aquifers in this region are currently showing worryingly rising trends and contamination of community drinking water supplies by e.coli occurs far too frequently. These high levels have occurred because of unfettered intensive dairy farming over the years. The perpetrators are never made to pay for their pollution. What will the NPS-FM do to ensure that this new irrigation scheme adheres to and meets the proposed bottom lines and does not leave current and future generations to clean up the mess it leaves behind?

As lay people we have limited knowledge of the science used to determine the 'values' of ecosystem and human health. We cannot comment on limits, standards and levels of things such as periphyton but instead rely on the simple measure of whether a water body is 'swimmable'.

We would like the Policy to: ensure all rivers are clean enough for swimming and other water contact sports. This standard should be a **compulsory** national standard for all councils, not an optional one. We'd simply like to swim in our river once again and see our grandchildren do the same.

We also have concerns about section 4.5 - Exceptions to National Bottom Lines.

The policy states:

'Decisions on whether to allow an exception under these grounds would be made by regional councils as part of the regional planning process. The checks and balances of the planning process would apply to exceptions decided by regional councils, including iwi and public input, submissions, hearings, and possible appeals.'

This is a dangerous clause. Regional Councils could use this exception clause to ignore bottom lines in order to pursue activities

that may bring regional economic development at the expense of the environment. In our vast experience the opportunity to have 'public input' by attending hearings, and making submissions is useless. If there is an 'out' in regional plans that can be used to override the bottom lines, councils will use it. Public participation will have no impact and be a waste of time and money.

We ask that the exception clause not be at the disposal of Regional Councils. If a council seeks exceptions to the freshwater objective below a national bottom line, an independent body that can look at the situation with an unbiased eye should make this decision.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit on the NPS-FM. We ask that the bottom lines be strengthened to ensure that all rivers are swimmable and that intensive land use be controlled to prevent further pollution.

Kind Regards
Liz Weir and Colin Morris
Feb 4th 2014