Your submission to Clean Water

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Clause

What are your thoughts on the proposed swimming targets, for example, on the timeframes and categories?

Notes

I would like to see a policy that is more ambitious. By the time 2040 comes around almost all of those in positions of responsibility at the moment will have vacated them, which means there is a serious lack of accountability and continuity to see the project through. As a 22 year old, I want to see a policy that can be implemented from today with a vision for the very near future, not one where by the time I'm almost 50 I can finally make recreational use of more New Zealand waterways because they are finally up to swimmable standards. The categories for swimmable water have the potential to be confusing and time consuming for users, which will minimise the bodies of water available to people for recreational use. It is most likely that you swallow water accidentally when swimming, tipping out of a boat, hiking across a river, fishing, getting splashed etc, meaning you run a certain risk of getting sick. By accepting the proposed standards we have the potential to exclude many bodies of water from recreational activities, as users won't want to run the risk of getting sick in a 'poor', 'intermittent' or even 'fair' rated body of water. To get a current or up to date status on each body of water, and what exactly they mean for users, when planning recreational activities may be time consuming or difficult for many people, particularly those unaccustomed to the legislation, standards or categories in place, such as tourists or those new to recreational water activities.

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What do you think about the proposed amendments to the Freshwater NPS?

Notes

In the preamble to the proposed amendments to the Freshwater NPS, it states that 'The Government wants New Zealand's rivers and lakes to be safe for swimming as often as possible. Specifically, it has set a target of 90% of rivers and lakes (as defined) to be swimmable by 2040. The expectation is that more of these rivers and lakes will be swimmable more of the time'. If the expectation is that more rivers and lakes will be swimmable more of the time, then why not set the standard to reflect the expectation? If it is proposed as an 'expectation', then there must be some grounds and validity for having reached it - so why lower our standards? In regards the the preamble comments relating to monitoring plans - why not engage and activate the communities and groups that want and require fresh, clean open water. Having clean swimmable water is an issue that effects everyone in New Zealand, but realistically some groups more so than others. Put feelers out to determine whether there are groups within the regional council areas that have a vested interest in clean swimmable water, and can be empowered to be involved in monitoring by taking samples etc. The proposed standards for E. Coli levels (540 E.coli units per 100mls) are too high, and would mean that a lot of rivers and lakes would be allowed to get worse than they are currently are with the current standard (130 E. coli units per 100mls). Lets aim to set high standards by improving the waterways that need improvement, and maintaining (while still striving for improvement) those that are within our current standards.

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What are your thoughts on the proposed stock exclusion regulation, for example, the timeframes and stock types to be excluded?

Notes

The proposal to exclude all stock is great, however may be slightly optimistic for a realistic implementation. Looking at the maps provided in the Freshwater NPS, we can see what areas are currently high risk and vulnerable. If we set our standards on protecting the areas known to be high risk we have a higher likelyhood of actually implementing viable standards that have a tangible result. Long term we can look to excluding all stock from the waterways, which will improve water quality and minimise the vulnerability, but if we can see which areas are worse off currently it makes sense for that to be the first priority.