

Your submission to Clean Water

Andy Pratt



Clause

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

Notes

I support the proposal to improve the swimmability of NZ waterways however, I think the target is too modest and the timeframe is too long (as a kiwi in their mid-50s I will be very unlikely to be enjoying the swimming opportunities in 23 years!). And, as a scientist, I do not consider your criteria for 'swimmable' as adequate to safeguard my health.

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

Notes

I have major concerns about the implications of these amendments, particularly with respect to the balancing of economic and ecological well being. As a kiwi and father of two I feel passionately about the economic well being of the country, but the economic well-being of NZ is fundamentally compromised if we do not have ecological sustainability as the foundation. Short term economic benefits that come at the expense to long term ecological health are a very poor investment for our country. As a scientist, I read with interest the recent Gluckman report. It is clear that the status quo is doing significant harm to our environment and compromising the natural assets for the country for future generations. I welcome the appointment of a Government Science advisor, but if the scientific evidence he presents is not taken seriously then we risk failing in ways that are under international spotlight at the present time (notably in Trump's USA). It is not possible to take the information in Gluckman's report seriously and not change the Freshwater NPS strongly in favour of rapid changes to enhance environmental safeguards. Consequently, I read with dismay the various elements of the Freshwater NPS that appear to enhance the influence of short term economic cost-benefit analysis over the provisions of the status quo (e.g. as outlined in Section 3.5 of the Clean Water summary document). This is a move in entirely in the wrong direction; and flies completely in the face of the now substantial evidence about the state of our freshwater systems. Even under the status quo the economic pressures on local authorities have been clearly too strong for them to implement sustainable ecological rulings. For this reason I strongly oppose inclusion in the Freshwater NPS any wording that undermines the provisions of the RMA with regards to ecological sustainability having primacy over other concerns. I do not think it is appropriate that local authorities should have to weigh up short term economic considerations alongside ecological sustainability. Once ecological sustainability is assured then economic benefits will follow, and follow in a sustainable way.

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

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I think that stock exclusion from waterways should be implemented as a matter of the greatest urgency - and more speedily than in the proposals. It is clear from Professor Gluckman's recent report that the waterways are being seriously compromised but the current burden from agriculture intensification (especially dairying) as well as urban run-off and that this has too be addressed urgently to avoid irreversible harm to this precious resource. The urban run-off issue should be addressed by improved stormwater and other infrastructure, but it should be remembered that the area of NZ affected by this is relatively localised. Agricultural intensification is taking a toll over huge swathes of the country. There is no place for stock animals in rivers when water is a valuable national resource (not to mention in the context of spurious claims to being a "clean, green, country" - a brand that is in significant threat by the current intensive agricultural practices).

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Do you have any other comments on the contents of the Clean Water discussion document?

Notes

I cannot but reflect that it would be funny if it were not so serious that, in a country which brands itself as "clean and green", it is an aspirational target to have the possibility of 90% of NZ waterways swimmable (by standards that are so lax that they would not tempt me into the water) in ONLY 23 years time!!!!!! What have we come to? The time to procrastinate is over. Make NZ truly green and green as a matter of urgency and we can all enjoy the benefits (economic, recreational and ecological) now and for future generations; fail to act decisively in that direction and you risk the wrath of the current electorate and disaffected potential tourists, and the damning condemnation of future NZers.