

To: Waikato Regional Council
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Submission on: Proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1: Waikato and Waipa River Catchments

Date: 2 March 2017

Submission by: Peter and Jenny Sinclair
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1. Background

We are dairy farmers in the Waipa Freshwater Management Unit. Our sub-catchment is Puniu at Barton's Corner Bridge. Our farming philosophy is to run a simple, low cost system with attention to detail, aimed at optimising use of resources and minimising impact on the environment.

Ours is a low-input (system 2) 160 cow farm with a mix of flat, rolling and steeper contour. 60ha of the 83ha farm is used for dairying, around 8.5ha is used to run drystock and the remainder has stock excluded. All waterways including the Puniu River, creeks, springs and wet areas are fenced for stock exclusion. To reduce the risk of erosion we have excluded stock from some steeper sidlings and we do not cultivate any land.

We have been proactive in reducing our impact on the environment by installing an effluent system with 90 days storage and the ability to spread effluent to half of the effective dairy platform. We use soil tests and nutrient budgeting along with advice from our fertiliser representative to optimise soil nutrient status for pasture growth while aiming to avoid wastage, run-off and leaching. We are relatively low users of Nitrogen and any applications are made when plants are actively growing to optimise uptake and reduce risk of leaching.

We have voluntarily completed a sustainable milk plan which looks at minimising or mitigating the effects of farming by planning and taking actions around water use, water management and infrastructure, land management and waterways management.

The Puniu River, which forms one of our farm boundaries, provides us, our family and our friends with a playground for swimming, kayaking and fishing. We recognise the need to protect and enhance this natural asset and other freshwater resources in the Waikato and Waipa River catchments, while ensuring that plans do not risk the social, cultural and economic viability of local communities.

Plan Change 1 -Waipa and Waikato River Catchments

2. Submission Summary

We support the overall intent of Plan Change 1 as an important first step in achieving the Vision and Strategy.

3. DairyNZ submission

We have seen and support the DairyNZ submission and seek the adoption of that submission subject to the additional submissions we have made below.

4. Personal Submission as follows:

Note: Where deletions are suggested the original text has been crossed out e.g. ~~crossed out~~. Where new text is inserted this has been underlined.

Section of Plan Change	Provision and Page Number	Support or Oppose	Decision Sought	Reason For Submission
Background and Explanation	Page 15 Paragraph 1 and 2	Support	Retain the plan for a staged approach where Plan Change 1 aims at achieving 10% of the Vision and Strategy within the next 10 years.	The extended time frame and staged approach to achieving the Vision and Strategy gives time for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information to be collected on how current and planned mitigations effect water quality. This information can

				<p>inform subsequent stages of the Healthy Rivers Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying options to achieve the Vision and Strategy that may not yet be known • Planning and budgeting for required actions thereby helping to protect the long-term viability of our business and maintaining thriving communities
Policies	3.11.3 Policy 1 Page 30	Support	Retain	It is important to recognise that Nitrogen, Phosphorus, sediment and microbial pathogens all effect water quality. Plans for improvement or maintenance of water quality should encompass all four of these contaminants to achieve waterways that are swimmable and safe for food collection.
Policies	3.11.3 Policy 2 a Page 30	Support subject to amendments	Retain with the added requirement to establish the current situation (management, infrastructure, actions) in the Farm Environment Plan.	<p>A tailored approach to managing diffuse discharges from farming activities will enable recognition of the opportunities and challenges unique to each farm and ensure optimum outcomes for reduction in contaminants.</p> <p>Farm Environment Plans should also state the current situation to recognise previous achievements in reducing contaminant discharges to show the direction of travel and inform further planning.</p>
Policies	3.11.3 Policy 2 b Page 30	Support	Retain	Farm Environment Plans, whether developed through consents or Certified Industry Schemes must be equally rigorous to avoid a lowering of standards and a resultant lowering of achievements in reducing contaminants.

Policies	3.11.3 Policy 2 c and d Page 30	Support subject to making amendments	<p>Retain c. Establishing a Nitrogen Reference Point for the property or enterprise; and</p> <p>Add: <u>Provide guidelines within the Farm Environment Plan to ensure that</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. <u>Farms with Nitrogen losses lower than the 75th percentile plan and implement good practice</u> II. <u>Farms above the 75th percentile for Nitrogen losses plan and implement methods to reduce to below that value</u> III. <p>Delete d and change to the suggestion made by DairyNZ for d. d. Requiring the degree of reduction in diffuse discharges of nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and microbial pathogens to be proportionate to the amount of current discharge (those discharging more are expected to make greater reductions), and proportionate to the scale of</p>	Establishment of a Nitrogen Reference point is important in identifying the highest Nitrogen loss farms.
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			water quality improvement required in the sub-catchment; and	
Policies	3.11.3 Policy 2 e Page 30	Support	Retain	Stock exclusion is one of the most beneficial ways of reducing contaminants to water.
Policies	3.11.3 Policy 6 Page 32	Support	Retain	Land use change that increases the contaminant loading to waterways without mitigation would jeopardise plans to maintain and improve waterway health. Even good management practice could not overcome the extra loading. The restrictions around land use change enable the effects of other environment management improvements to be determined. Consent applications should not be given if there would be an unmitigated increase in contaminants to waterbodies.
Methods	3.11.4.2 Page 36	Support	Retain	All industry schemes must all adhere to the same standards so it is important that they are certified and consistent.
Schedules And replicated in Matters of Control	Schedule 1 Page 53 Requirements of Farm Environment Plans 5 a, b And the replicated requirements from page 43 "Matters of Control" iii and iv.	Support subject to making amendments	5. A description of the following: (a) Actions, timeframes and other measures to ensure that <u>manage</u> the diffuse discharge of nitrogen from the property or enterprise, as measured by the five-year rolling average annual nitrogen loss as determined by the use of the current version of OVERSEER [®] , does not increase beyond the property or	Change from a 5-year rolling average to a 5-year average would avoid the possibility of a sinking lid effect. We agree that the highest Nitrogen losers should be required to reduce below the 75 th percentile and then continue with good practice. In its current form this plan offers grandparenting of N leaching and does not encourage improvement from anyone who is below the 75 th percentile. It only addresses

			<p>enterprise's Nitrogen Reference Point, unless other suitable mitigations are specified; or constitute good management practice.</p> <p>Retain (b) Where the Nitrogen Reference Point exceeds the 75th percentile nitrogen leaching value, actions, timeframes and other measures to ensure the diffuse discharge of nitrogen is reduced so that it does not exceed the 75th percentile nitrogen leaching value by 1 July 2026, except in the case of Rule 3.11.5.5.</p> <p><u>(c) Where the Nitrogen Reference point falls between the 50th and 74th percentile; identify and implement actions required to work towards industry good management practice in order to reduce their Nitrogen leaching to at least 10% below their reference point by 1 July 2026.</u></p> <p><u>(d) Where the Nitrogen Reference point falls between the 25th and 49th percentile;</u></p>	<p>behaviour of enterprises with the highest diffuse discharges. Also, in its current form, the requirement penalises those farmers who have made the effort to reduce their discharges already, without legislation, leaving them with limited ability to alter their systems. Changing from a requirement to “not increase” discharges beyond an enterprise’s current Nitrogen Reference Point to a requirement to carry out good practice to manage discharges will achieve behavioural change with an overall reduction in Nitrogen discharges.</p> <p>We suggest a stepped approach as indicated by the inserted points (c), (d) and (e) to encourage more effort to reduce Nitrogen losses by those farmers in the 50th to 74th percentile and to avoid unfairly penalising the lower Nitrogen losers.</p>
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			<p><u>continue with use of good management practice to hold at or below the Nitrogen Reference Point over a 5-year average.</u></p> <p><u>(e) Where the Nitrogen Reference point falls under the 25th percentile continue with use of good management practice with the flexibility of 10% variation from the reference point over a 5-year average.</u></p>	
Schedules	Schedule B f page 47	Support subject to suggested amendment	f. The reference period is the two <u>three</u> financial years covering <u>2013/2014, 2014/2015, 2015/2016</u> , except for commercial vegetable production in which case the reference period is 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2016.	Due to constraints of low milk payments during the 2014/15 and 2015/16 seasons farming businesses were not run as per normal. Farmer actions to manage the low incomes included destocking and reducing feed inputs. Such actions may not have been economically viable in the long-term for farmers and may not reflect the usual farming practices. We suggest that the reference period be extended back one more year to include 2013/14 to include a reference point from a more usual year.
Schedules	Schedule C Page 50	Support with amendments for clarification	2. New fences installed after 22 October 2016 must be located to ensure cattle, horses, deer and pigs cannot be <i>within one metre of the bed of the water body</i> (excluding constructed wetlands).	To the lay-person it may not be clear where one meter from the bed of the water body is. We approve that if there are existing fences for stock exclusion then these are not required to be moved until they need to be replaced. Most (97%) of dairy farmers have already fenced their waterbodies. It would be unreasonable to

				require the fences to be moved to comply with the Plan Change distance requirements.
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I wish to speak at the hearing in support of my submissions

Signed: 

Date: 2 March 2017