

**WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL PROPOSED WAIKATO REGIONAL PLAN CHANGE 1 -  
WAIKATO AND WAIPA RIVER CATCHMENTS**

**Submission Form**

Submission on a publicly notified proposed Regional Plan prepared under the Resource Management Act 1991.

**On:** The Waikato Regional Councils proposed Waikato Regional Plan Change 1 - Waikato and Waipa River Catchments

**To:** Waikato Regional Council  
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Hamilton East  
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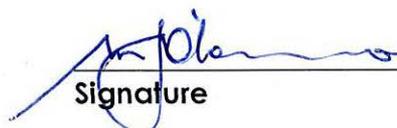
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I am not a trade competitor for the purposes of the submission but the proposed plan has a direct impact on my ability to farm. If changes sought in the plan are adopted they may impact on others but I am not in direct trade competition with them.

**I wish to be heard in support of this submission.**

 \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature date 7/03/2017

**Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Waikato Regional Councils proposed Plan Change 1.

## WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL PROPOSED WAIKATO REGIONAL PLAN CHANGE 1 - WAIKATO AND WAIPA RIVER CATCHMENTS

I am a third-generation farmer and have made farming my career of choice.

In 1992, after a twelve-year share milking career, my wife Andrea and I purchased our own 145ha dairy farm located in the Te Kawa district South of Te Awamutu. We farm this property in our own account through two entities being M&A O'Connor Ltd and the Kakepuku Trust.

Four years later in 1996, we, along with three associates, formed an equity partnership and invested in a mid-Canterbury dairy conversion. This business has evolved and I am now the major shareholder and general manager of Spectrum Dairies Limited Partnership known as the Spectrum Group. In my role as General Manager of Spectrum Group I have an association through ownership and an influence with the following properties within the regions affected by the proposed plan change.

- Koromiko Grazing Ltd. The primary purpose of this 2,388ha property is to provide a dairy heifer grazing service to the owners of the business, grow dairy beef for trade and run a sheep and beef operation on the steeper marginal country. As well as having an ownership stake in this business, I have chaired the board of directors since purchasing the property in 2008. During that time, we have established a reticulated stock water system, fenced waterways and undertaken riparian planting. We have already and are actively fencing off native bush areas. This property is situated in the Waipa Valley South East of Te Kuiti and while it is intensively farmed, we have minimised soil runoff to waterways through management change to reduce the areas cropped annually.
- Hinewai Holdings Ltd. This 227ha dairy farm is owned by Spectrum Dairies LP and located in the Te Kawa region North of Otorohanga. The property is a mix of rolling Maeroa Ash and Peat land and since purchasing the property in 2015, all drains have been fenced to exclude stock from waterways and improvements made to effluent disposal and stock water reticulation. Management techniques have been undertaken to minimise pasture damage, eradicate weeds and limit soil erosion.
- Finbar Farm Ltd is adjacent to my family's 220ha dairy and beef farm R.P O'Connor & Son Ltd, located in Te Pahu on the slopes of Mt Pirongia. This 97ha property was purchased in 2014 by family members to provide scale and improve efficiency to R.P O'Connor & Son Ltd operations by amalgamation. My grandfather purchased the original property in the early 1920's. Since owning Finbar, we have eradicated noxious weeds, fenced waterways to exclude stock, fenced at risk terrain and planted with native and established a new reticulated stock water system. These measures are in line with our family history of protection and conservation as displayed by both voluntary and QE11 covenanted areas of native bush on the adjoining R.P O'Connor & Son Ltd.
- In conjunction with the Vela family's acquisition of property for thoroughbred horse grazing, Spectrum Dairies LP provides day to day management through a 50/50 share milking arrangement to them on the areas utilised by dairy farming. Three contiguous dairy farming properties covering approximately 580ha have been purchased by the Vela family in the Hinuera region. Since acquiring the properties, substantial investment has been undertaken in the fencing of waterways, improvement of effluent storage and management, stock water reticulation and aesthetic plantings. Part of the property is hill country on which we have imposed a more lenient grazing management regime more conducive to the sensitive nature of this topography.

## WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL PROPOSED WAIKATO REGIONAL PLAN CHANGE 1 - WAIKATO AND WAIPA RIVER CATCHMENTS

The specific provisions of the proposal that this submission relates to and the decisions it seeks from Council are as detailed in the following table. The outcomes sought and the wording used is as a suggestion only, where a suggestion is proposed it is with the intention of 'or words to that effect'. The outcomes sought may require consequential changes to the plan, including Objectives, Policies, or other rules, or restructuring of the Plan, or parts thereof, to give effect to the relief sought.

The specific provisions my submission relates to are:	My submission is that:		The decision I would like the Waikato Regional Council to make is:
	SUPPORT / OPPOSE	REASON	RELIEF SOUGHT
Objective 1. 3.11, including values 3.11.1, 3.11.1.1 and 3.11.1.2.	I support these objectives with amendments.	<p>I support the protection and restoration of our waterways however, I am concerned that if the values set are not supported by objectives that can honestly be achieved then the regional plan as proposed will not have integrity.</p> <p>All inhabitants of the region have a responsibility to helping achieve the plan change. We need to recognize that what was possible in pre-European times may no longer be an appropriate goal just because of the start point we have and the pressure of population.</p>	<p>Retain the intent of the objective but amend so the region is split into sub catchments which include all of the regions diversity to ensure that the water quality targets are achievable within the timeframe given.</p> <p>Greater clarity is sought about how to mitigate the effect of certain farming practices and the sensitivities of certain areas (swamps, soil types) on the water that enters the tributaries.</p>
Objective 2.	I support this objective with amendments.	Cultural and economic wellbeing of a community is essential and they are linked. I don't think you can have one without the other. The social upheaval and damage that could be imposed on various sectors (farmers) if not well understood could be huge.	I would like to see a greater emphasis placed on understanding the economic effects of imposing a rule may or may not help achieve the desired objective.

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		I would like to see greater emphasis placed on the economic effects of imposing a rule that may or may not have the desired effect.	To minimise the social impact which could occur, a pathway needs to be found for farmers to address the environmental concerns raised while still being capable of operating a viable and healthy business.
Objective 3.	I oppose this objective until there are approved amendments to objectives 1 and 2.	I agree with the need to monitor progress and have a staged approach to achieving the desired objective but first, the plan needs to be recognised as being possible to achieve.	More work is required on assessing the information already held to make sure that the measure and assumptions are correct.

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Policies 1 to 6.	I oppose these policies but would approve with amendments that provided greater clarity to farmers and were more objective regarding land use change.	<p>The impact of these policies could severely undermine value and the economics of the farming business. The social impact of major and quickly implemented change on farming practice could have a greater negative impact than current practice.</p> <p>Our agricultural industry has developed and grown over two millennia so to impose change radically within relatively short timeframes could have detrimental effects such as noxious weed infestation, not contemplated. History would suggest that people will find a way and act quickly to minimise the negative impact of rules being imposed. This would be counterproductive to the plan change objectives.</p>	<p>Famers generally see themselves as custodians of the land. Wider consultation and understanding will be required, often on a farm by farm basis to gain support.</p> <p>Many of the farmers making the financial decisions are becoming aged and could see yet more red tape as a reason to sell. The economic outfall and value loss of such a mass exit should not be underestimated.</p> <p>Experience would suggest that proposing logical solutions to enhance properties and the business will be earnestly considered. In many cases, land use changes to intensify some parts of a farm allowing the destocking of others has a significant positive effect from both an economic and environmental point of view.</p>
Farm Environment Plans specifically.	I support the need for farm plans with amendments.	Planning helps to provide better understanding and forces people to think strategically about their business. Normally this will have a beneficial effect on the business and provide clarity to the operators.	Perhaps a different approach can be taken with these plans to ascertain the base line and consider the management changes required to improve.

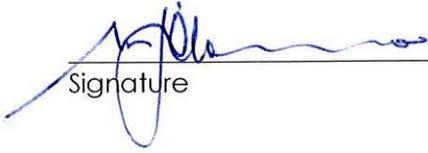
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		<p>Making sure that the farm plan captures more than just environmental compliance could have a positive effect on decisions that are required to achieve the objectives of the proposed plan change.</p>	<p>Make the farm environment plans more like farm business plans that embrace positive change for better business rather than being regulated to a rule.</p> <p>Delete requirement to be held at or below the properties nitrogen reference point. It could be that land use change reduces the discharge of contaminants in sensitive areas but increases in less sensitive areas of a property to achieve an economic and environmental benefit. Such a change in farming practice needs planning and logic.</p>

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Yours sincerely

Mike O'Connor.



Signature

7/05/2017  
Date