

Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee – Community Meeting 2

SUBJECT Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee potential changes to water allocation policies – Meeting with invited water users

WHEN Monday 12 February 2018, 7-9PM

WHERE Carterton Events Centre

ATTENDEES

WHAITUA COMMITTEE Peter Gawith, Esther Dijkstra, Aidan Bichan, Colin Olds, Philip Palmer, Rebecca Fox, Mike Ashby, Ra Smith.

PROJECT TEAM Kat Banyard, Natasha Tomic, Mike Grace, Matt Hickman, Mike Thompson.

WATER USERS 31 water users attended the meeting.

Question 1: Is there anything you still don't understand?

- Lack of economic data. Individual users impacted in the millions of dollars.
- Science – analysis of different options for fish
- What about other mitigations? – storage – nutrients – shading – on-farm/urban improvements
- Where is the outcome regarding Category A groundwater – connectivity questions → credibility question (no credibility)
- Disconnect between science and rules → need standard tests for connectivity → concern around the line drawn designating Category A groundwater. Why is it like that?
- Transparency in decision making regarding Category A groundwater
- Understanding of WWT impact and role of urban sewage (e.g. Carterton and bore water)
- Proposals affect whole Wairarapa Valley – humans more important than fish
- Where does water end up after irrigation?
- Previously restrictions led to more pumping. As soon as river level went down pumping went FLAT OUT. So not efficient. E.g. go 24 hours a day until cut off.
- Impact of drainage installed over the years
- Urban/rural split. Farmers 'being picked on'. What about role of town folk? Equity issue and efficiency of use. Why don't towns save water?
- No mention of big water dams for irrigation. What role does this play? Dams and weirs to control water flow needed.
- Freshwater coming out of bottom of catchment. Do we understand groundwater movement?
- Who pays? The urban area? E.g. ↓ in \$1M/farm value
- Bed of river and banks eroding → this is the main problem. Need to get metal out of river. Thousands of tonnes coming down river.
- Catchment committees would have been a better engagement. Similar to water quality ones. We need good info.

- Has the option to see what is happening as go along e.g. impacts of climate change been considered?
- How are you balancing the values of the community when making decisions?
- Understand proposals but you're making decisions without all info
- Environmental impacts considered, economic and social less considered
- Difference between social and cultural impacts
- How considered social cost? Not presented. Will affect people's jobs e.g. through scaling back irrigation.
- Are low flows caused by abstraction? Lower flows across the whole catchment, even above abstraction
- How many torrent fish have been caught?
- What affect do 50 Category A groundwater takes have on the river?
- Need to be same for towns?
- How many consents are there to take water on the Waipoua River? Why are we using Waipoua as an example when there are such limited takes?
- How much weighting is given to climate change?
- Reductions will shut us off
- Wielding better efficiency for urban
- More level playing field
- Cropping – needed to irrigate before Christmas but could only for 12 hours a day (for about 6 weeks)
- RWC representing wider community → take out territorial authority and regional council reps – Who is left on it? Are there any recreational reps on the RWC?
- Huge impact on the smallest majority
- Urban still don't feel possible impact of what could happen
- Urban – grey water → there is no similar to the below for urban
- Dairy farmer doesn't comply then their shed milk doesn't get picked up
- Nothing is as demotivating as not seeing urban doing their bit – change this by charging urban for what they use above a potential allocation.
- Gaps in understanding of how Whaitua Committee got to where they got.
- What are the effects on other water users (commercial)?
- Cease takes at low flows (can't farm)
- Storage (water harvesting)
- Farm plan: see the full package as nutrients and allocation
- Yes to adapt. Equipment idle. Loose staff school.

Question 2: Heaving heard what's being proposed, what's your reaction?

- Win – loss. How much benefit to the environment is there?
- Harming future opportunities – profit
- Show us the science to support this
- Send us backwards
- Uncertainty

- Won't attract industry
- Understand aquifers better (deeper water)
- Quick changes in Horizons and with Ruataniwha have resulted in bad policy which councils are trying to unwind but is very difficult
- Economics of nutrient loss also a factor – farming change for unreliable water and nutrient reduction must be considered
- Why 90% and not 70% with other strategies?
- Extreme concern
- Not a big picture presented
- A bit blurry
- Big drop in farm revenue
- Townies need to pay for it
- Drainage doesn't help → water designed to move quickly
- Need more scientific facts
- Do we want more water in a river to dilute town discharge? Big white suds..?
- Smell of Masterton discharge at high flows
- Manage flood flows to stop farm innovation
- Is low flow regulation affecting whole Wairarapa?
- Ability to farm affected directly
- Fairness – we have to be equitable across the Wairarapa – not just those on vulnerable aquifers
- Don't think you have done economic studies that show impacts on businesses and communities, people, families, and local community
- In drought we can't feed even half our stock without irrigation
- We want to work sustainably so our children can farm
- Impacts financially - More than \$1M, Two staff and 50k each, \$2 – 300k, \$3m plus at table. How do we feed cows when we lose water?
- Concern about using national info on torrent fish. Too broad based, not catchment based
- Impact of 100% Category A groundwater cease take is huge. A couple of weeks can affect whole summer. Significant economic impact.
- Have we considered RMA need to protect current investment? Linked in with length of consents
- River also dropping through flood practices
- Could lead to dairy farming stopping → wouldn't be economic anymore → pride/family connection to farm lost
- Increasing economics across the catchment from more irrigation. Puts money back into economy.

Question 3: What would it take for you to be able to transition to a new water regime?

- Shared allocation – and transfer
- The 'pay back' what should be – more water in the river → since flood management the river has lost pools, nature of the river damaged dramatically; straight out and gone. How could we slow water when rivers in flood?

- Slowing down water using it later – “win – wins”
- “Buffer systems” along river to slow water down; not necessarily dams → systems in place down river to slow water down; get deeper pools
- Think more cleverly about small dams; catchment or property scale dams
- “High trust models” – catchment model
- Told by RWC if you don’t use your 90% you’ll lose it
- Incentives for good environmental behaviour not just bad, non-compliance
- Water share, transfer between infrastructure investments
- Water transfer
- Shared consent
- Need positive support for dams/storage to support increasing the flows; time of implementation – need good time to have enough time to adapt
- Wrong question
- Higher water flow OK, but not at cost of irrigation.
- Storage – irrigation – aquifer recharge – river augmentation, nutrient management, shading
- Money
- ↓ production
- Change in production methods → but this is a generational change (also different on each farm)
- Turn into gardens → will there be demand?
- More storage, (‘if allowed to’) – flat country, storage difficult. Not just dams, could be in soil?
- January critical month and won’t be able to carry on if this is cut off. Could lose 1/3 income if shut for a month.
- Palm level – leaps
- Marijuana – alternative land use
- Housed cows
- Can’t store the equivalent of 2.4
- If council are serious they need a dam
- We’re fighting the organisation we pay rates to
- Reducing scale of operations/food/production
- If it’s working now, why are we changing?
- Not viable at proposed flows
- Can’t lose certainty of being able to feed animals
- Already doing good water efficiency
- Biggest problem is CAT A cease take. People won’t be able to afford to make the efficiency improvements. Farmers are already doing technology improvements as they come.
- Storage and managed aquifer recharge
- How affordable will it be?
- Different river management practices

Points made by speakers to the whole meeting at the end:

- Health and well-being of farming family’s needs to be considered

- What percent of total abstraction? Category A - 40%
- Will put water back in river further down. How quickly will water be back in river?
- Do environmental benefits outweigh economic?
- Where testing bores and rivers to show water goes back in the river?
- Where are the political representatives? They should be here to listen.
- The whole valley should be under ONE regulatory regime
- How will Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee be able to communicate with those most affected?
People in the room would like to communicate through more face to face meetings.
- Rural subdivision – requires 20ls per day. Response: The Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee is looking to reduce permitted activities to 5l under the WIP.
- Consenting agency should stop all surface takes for subdivisions. Look at tanks and other storage. Combined district council plan review next year is considering roof storage.
- Need time and info so farmers can challenge WIP with own experts etc.
- For some it means a 50% loss of production
- Lose investment in infrastructure
- Lose support of banks
- Need to see all Whaitua recommendations in one place to be able to see entire effect of recommendations on business
- Whaitua need to address other factors esp. MDC discharge
- Big dam is a solution
- Agree dairy has had an affect but the industry is making an effort and investing in improvement to retain viability so this can continue
- There is no minimum timeframe for implementation of proposed recommendations. They are unacceptable.
- Water quality is a whole community matter
- Farmers feel somewhat targeted
- What are the impacts on other commercial users?
- Need money to invest in effluent management and wetlands
- Need to consider quality and quantity together
- Expect to move to horticulture in the future but need water for land use charge
- Encourage long term decision making conservatism for farmers and environment
- Love to see more water in the river but this isn't the option to fix that
- Impacts on those they employ
- Proud of being from the Wairarapa and supporting local business. Recommendations will put us out of business and put our staff and families at risk.
- Link between water allocation and investment already being made in nutrient management.
- Already have to deal with fluctuating commodity prices.
- Climate change is likely to happen – 93 days by RWC proposals in a bad year. Options at 3250 l/s min flow are limited.
- If 20% reduction in reliability. If dry cows, that's a 50% loss of production, loss of investment in irrigation.
- Industry have made a lot of improvements around improving water quality – dairy farms
- If productive, continue to invest

- No timeframe that's acceptable
- Community problem – community solutions
- Nutrient limits – Peter explained where the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee thinking on this is
- Farmers feel targeted – impacts on industry, urban people.
- Do you have consensus as a RWC?
- How come to 340l/s min flow decision?
- Less irrigation won't lead to less nutrient loss