



Freshwater Record of Meeting
Taranaki Catchment Communities and Federated Farmers
Freshwater (Water Take) Workshop
Friday, 10 June 2022, 10:00am – 1pm
Dairy NZ offices, Fenton St, Stratford

Attendees:

Alana Marriner	Marriner Farm Consultancy
Tessa Tate	Dairy NZ
Colin Kay	Kay Consulting
Katie Morrison	Federated Farmers
Mark Hooper	Federated Farmers
Adrienne Cook	Federated Farmers
Liam O'Sullivan	Farmer
Leedom Gibbs	Federated Farmers
Lincoln McCrea	Farmer
Niels Hansen	Federated Farmers
Jarrold Cougan	Farmer
Donna Cram	Taranaki Catchment Communities
Lloyd Morgan	Taranaki Catchment Communities
Louise Thompson	Taranaki Catchment Communities
Ross Dunlop	Farmer

TRC staff:

Steve Ruru
Dan Harrison
Kelly Langton
Jose Reader
Charles Woollin
Jake Harrison
Don Shearman
Regan Phipps



Attendees to the workshop were welcomed by Taranaki Regional Council Director-Operations Dan Harrison. Mr Harrison explained that the workshop was part of the Council's programme to hear from the community about how they would like to see the region's freshwater protected and managed.

Mr Harrison advised that the input from workshops and engagement over the next two years would help shape the Council's Natural Resources Plan.

FRESHWATER VALUES

Taranaki Regional Council Manager-Science and Technology, Regan Phipps, explained that Te Mana o Te Wai principles and its hierarchy of obligations provided a fundamental shift in how freshwater would be managed going forward.

He confirmed that the National Objectives Framework (NOF) in the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management establishes how the Council must manage freshwater quality, by providing a series of compulsory freshwater values, as well as the scope for the community to identify values that are important to them.

Mr Phipps noted that Council will be collaborating with tangata whenua and the community on establishing limits, outcomes and targets that will deliver on the freshwater values and community aspirations for freshwater.

TE MANA O TE WAI

Taranaki Regional Council Snr Policy Analyst, Kelly Langton, provided an overview of Te Mana o Te Wai including the hierarchy of obligations which establishes what things the Council must give priority to when making freshwater management decisions.

Ms Langton confirmed that the hierarchy gives highest priority to the health and wellbeing of waterbodies and freshwater ecosystems, followed by the health and wellbeing needs of people, and lastly the ability of people and communities to provide for their social economic and cultural wellbeing. Ms Langton confirmed that the hierarchy will come into play with every planning decision.

Following this overview, the following question were posed: **"How can dairy, sheep and beef farmers give effect to the hierarchy of obligations in Te Mana o Te Wai?"**

Key themes and questions from participant feedback are noted below:



The hierarchy's primary focus on water quality is seemingly at the expense of other well-beings. We all want healthy rivers, but farming needs to be economically viable as well.

There needs to be an understanding of what 'water quality comes first' actually means. Farmers want to improve water quality. We [farmers] have done a lot already in terms of planting and fencing waterways, protecting wetlands, safe effluent disposal and more. What else can we do? It's a struggle to understand what putting water quality first will mean.

Farmers have already done an enormous amount such as fencing off waterways, creating wetlands and preventing effluent overflows. There needs to be some acknowledgement that good practices are already being followed.

Unfortunately Te Mana o Te Wai gives greater importance to something living in the water than to humans. Farmers are already giving effect to Te Mana o Te Wai, and the new concept is undermining what we're doing.

Any rules need to be applied consistently across rural and urban sectors. For instance, if farmers face fines for chemical discharges, why aren't urban residents who let car washing detergents into stormwater drains also facing abatement notices?

The farming community feels that it is being unfairly treated. For instance, we have to pay for Three Waters infrastructure even though we don't use this. We shouldn't be charged for what we don't use.

At the end of the day, the changes will mean things will cost more. The community has aspirations for the water, but at the end of the day, the cost of change is largely borne by farmers. We'd like to a solution where the cost of change is more fairly apportioned.

There are lots of 'mind shift' changes. Education will be key as things can't change overnight, and it will be important to make sure that there is sufficient time for change, as well.

There has to be realistic solutions to achieve the goals. For some farmers, we don't know what else can be done apart from not farming anymore.

If there are bottom lines about water quality, what is point in having this conversation? Attendees felt that it's important for Regionl Council to push back on things that are set by government that aren't workable in our region. Ms Reader offered the example of the Council providing feedback on wetland regulations that has seen a more workable definition implemented.



Chief Executive Steve Ruru told the workshop that it was about finding the right balance and what environmental limits the community are prepared to accept.

STATE OF FRESHWATER

Mr Phipps explained that Council was proposing to change the Freshwater Management Unit (FMU) structure to capture source to sea catchments.

The workshop discussed the challenge of meeting E.coli targets and how this affected the 'swimmability' of rivers. To concerns raised about faecal matter from birds in waterways, Mr Phipps pointed out that Council was able to break down the DNA of the matter to find out whether it was from birds or other animals.

Mr Phipps said fine sediment in rivers and streams was an issue and was expected to get worse because of the impact of climate change.

He also confirmed that phosphorus was present in our waterways, and preliminary assessment indicates that this is naturally occurring, but there is further work underway to confirm this.

Mr Phipps noted that macroinvertebrate health was a good indicator of the health of ecosystems and the region wouldn't be doing as well in this area if it hadn't have been for fencing and planting by farmers.

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY

Land Services Manager, Don Shearman, outlined various programmes that are having a positive impact on water quality.

He hailed the significant effort of farmers in the riparian planting programme. Since it started in 1993, around seven million plants have been distributed and this has both had an impact on water quality and generated other benefits such as creating corridors for native birds to move around. Council continues to work with a 'handful' of farmers who haven't yet planted on their farms.

COMPREHENSIVE FARM PLANS

The workshop heard from Mr Shearman that Council had people available to assist farmers with understanding new government regulations. There was no need to reinvent the wheel with farm plans as they have already been successfully been implemented in the past. While the specifics of new farm plan regulations were still under development by the government,



it is anticipated that those farmers with existing Regional Council farm plans will be well on their way to compliance with the new regulations.

LONG-TERM VISION FOR FRESHWATER

Policy Analyst Grace Marcroft introduced feedback from community on what the vision for the region's freshwater should be. Key themes from the consultation included swimmability, supporting biodiversity, social responsibility and clean, clear and fresh water. She said the vision for freshwater was not locked into a timeframe so it was up to the community to set that timeframe.

The following question was posed: **“What are the aspirations for freshwater”**

Key themes and questions from participant feedback are noted below:

The initial public feedback shows a bias. For farmers it's not about economic gain but economic survival. People are keen for more sustainability, but they don't want to pay for it. Farmers are paying disproportionately compared to the rest of the community.

There are expectations and aspirations discussed here which can't be met.

Ms Marcroft confirmed that the full report on consultation with the community on this matter was available on the Council's website.

WATER TAKE OVERVIEW

Ms Langton presented several water take scenarios for consideration. The information showed the likely impact on the level of protection for instream insects and fish habitat at various water take levels.

Ms Langton also introduced several possible planning scenarios. She noted that Council and the community needed pragmatic solutions to how much water can be taken from water bodies, given that some catchments are likely to be overallocated in terms of water take.

She confirmed that the Resource Management Act provides for water to be taken for the purpose of feeding stock, though there will likely be some tightening around the rules for this. Water take for other farm uses must be reasonable and not have adverse environmental effects. Ms Langton confirmed that Council will be working with farmers and the community to develop understanding of that looks like for Taranaki.



Feedback from other community workshops on water take were also shared by Ms Langton. She identified that the feedback was simply a reflection of the comments raised during the meeting, and was not Council policy.

The conversation on water take was cut short due to time limitations, and the Regional Council extended an offer for staff to join any upcoming Federated Farmers or Taranaki Catchment Communities meeting to more fully discuss this matter.

Mr Harrison thanked the attendees and said the workshop had seen a robust discussion, which was exactly the type of discussion that events like this were organised for. He encouraged attendees to come to other workshops and meetings and help shape Council plans.

The meeting closed at 1pm.