

Speaking Notes

Bob Anker

Hearing Stream 2

Oral presentation to Commissioners.

We will confess to being totally confused by the rebuttal evidence of James Blyth. It was our understanding that such evidence was to be stated in Simple English. This is a mass of scientific equations and uses terms that are incomprehensible to me. It may well demonstrate the presence of an enhanced level of sediment but cannot extrapolate the origination point of that sediment.

In my submission I focussed on whether the outlined structure for monitoring water quality was fit for purpose. It was the opinion of the Mangaroa Valley focus group that a single monitoring station, situated at the confluence of the Mangaroa river and the Hutt river was not sufficient. A similar question was raised in respect of the Akatarawa river with a single monitoring station at the confluence of the Akatarawa river and the Hutt river at Birchville.

Both the Akatarawa river and the Mangaroa rivers are over 20km long from source to their respective confluences with the mainstream of the Hutt river.

Our community understands the response of Mary O'Callaghan in that her considered opinion is that the single monitoring points are sufficient. It is of concern to us that there is no specification as to the scope of the use of the data that is gathered at these points

In the event that the collected data is used to simply state that the water quality at that singular point is X and that changes in quality at that singular point can be tracked as at specified dates, then that is in itself sufficient

Our concern is that the data will then be extrapolated to draw conclusions regarding the upstream causes of any changes observed at the monitoring point. This; in itself, becomes justification for requiring properties in excess of 4 hectares to be registered as farms and be required to monitor Nitrogen and Phosphorus levels at the boundary.

It is clear to us that whilst a singular point can indicate changes that have taken place, that singular point cannot identify where those changes have arisen. The onus is then placed on landowners to prove a negative.

We are also concerned that in respect of nutrients, landowners are being required to solve a problem that does not exist.

In my presentation for Hearing Stream 1, I put forward the position that the number of monitoring points was not adequate for the Mangaroa River catchment and neither was it adequate for the Akatarawa River catchment.

Mary O'Callahan has responded and put forward her perception as to why the number is sufficient.

In doing so, Mary has highlighted a serious underlying issue in that adequacy is dependent on the intended use to which the gathered data is to be applied. The critical question becomes one of once the data is collected and forms a pattern, what is the intended use of that pattern of data.

The unanswered question becomes “and then what?”

Let us just focus on the data collected at the confluence of the Mangaroa River and the Hutt River. This data gives us information relating to the composition of the water at that physical point at that specific time. If the same data is collected over a series of points in time, then that will produce a pattern showing the changes that have taken place at that physical location.

The data may do many things but what it cannot do is identify the point within the catchment where the change in data originated. Hence my question – and then what.

The concern of my community is, that based on past track record, GWRC will use the singularity point of data to justify a wide sweeping drag net of measures that will affect the entire catchment. We are of the opinion that there should be a detailed plan of action stipulated that clearly spells out the “then what” action plan. We consider that this action plan should be put forward for community consultation.

Our Community is also concerned that there appears to be a disproportionate burden placed on “private” Landowners to implement any required actions. Within the Mangaroa River catchment, as outlined by the physical watershed, there is a large proportion of land owned by the Greater Wellington Regional Council. Within this watershed there are large numbers; correction, very large numbers of feral animals. Deer have assumed virtual plague proportions. Last week my granddaughter went out to check on her pony at 9pm and within the paddock boundary of some 50 metres by 100 metres was one stag and 6 hinds. These are not our stock but eat our pasture and foul our waterways.

Our community understands that some rules are necessary for the common good. We are, however, of the firm opinion that the rules should apply to all and that includes Local and Regional Authorities. When it comes to tracking pollution, tracking sediment and fencing waterways all of these should apply even-handedly.

As we come to the next hearing stream, we will encounter a raft of situations where rules have been put in place in a hap-hazard fashion because it seemed like a good idea at the time.

Bob Anker