

Meeting with hill country farmers

SUBJECT Meeting with hill country farmers on draft Ruamāhanga WIP recommendations

WHEN Thursday 14 June 2018, 6:30-8:30PM

WHERE Makoura College Hall, Masterton

ATTENDEES

WHAITUA COMMITTEE Peter Gawith, Esther Dijkstra, Mike Birch, David Holmes, Aidan Bichan, Mike Ashby

PROJECT TEAM SUPPORT Kat Banyard, David Boone, Petra Fransen

COMMUNITY MEMBERS 21 community members attended

MEETING CONTENT

The meeting started with introductions from Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee members.

Mike Birch talked through the freshwater objectives table and freshwater management map (FMU) and encouraged people to think about which FMU they are in.

Copies of the [draft Whaitua Implementation Programme \(WIP\)](#) were made available for people to refer to.

Peter Gawith talked through the approach to managing contaminants, in particular sediment. He explained that nitrogen is not the major problem in the catchment. Peter talked through the limit tables and encouraged people to look at the reductions proposed for their FMU. Peter acknowledged the lack of quality data on sediment in the catchment and that the Committee is making recommendations about better monitoring.

The rest of the meeting was an informal question and answer session. Some of the key questions are below.

Q: What if I'm outside the FMU boundaries?

A: The property will then be covered by a different whaitua.

Q: What happens if your property crosses FMU boundaries?

A: Will consider further.

Q: How much algae is good?

A: The thumb test is useful. Some algae is good for the health of the waterway. Too much absorbs significant amounts of oxygen which is bad for fish.

Q: Why is the Kopuaranga phosphorus reduction so big? Did we measure MCI when we took out the willows in Kopuaranga?

A: Are investigating further this number.

Q: How have we come up with target numbers?

A: The target loads have been developed to meet the freshwater objectives.

Q: How much data has been used to establish the baseline sediment data? What ecological information did you have?

A: We have very poor sediment data which has been acknowledged. There will be costs associated with increased monitoring. Most sediment flows out in big events. The ecological work carried out showed very little difference.

Q What is the % reduction we're looking for vs pre-human?

Q: What will happen if these limits are not met? How is this going to be policed? Don't believe that this is just direction.

A: Focus on supporting people to work within the limits rather than a policing focus.

Q: Is the RWC asking for stock number reporting?

A: No.

Q: How do you get good info? What if you do 12 monitoring sites over the year but a big flood and sediment comes down and that is or isn't in there?

Q: What about the historical loads already in the rivers? What is it? We might do lots of work but still not meet the limits due to historical sedimentation. What happens then?

Q: How long would it take to flush out in a river?

Q: Other councils have excluded flood flows from their monitoring, can we do the same?

A: Have made recommendations around monitoring sediment in the draft WIP. We don't know how long it would take to flush out the river.

- Innovations coming along all the time. E.g. Dung beetles – looking at reductions of *E.coli*. GWRC has a deal. Wanting to get colonisation.
- Had a situation with no flow in the Wainuioru. This was not farmers fault but no one to blame. Taureru is similar. Getting rid of willows is good but will dump sediment in the river. People might do good things but it will get worse first. People fear making a change as they don't want to be blamed if the damage is made worse in the short term.

Q: Is there an option for no limits? Would rather have no limits. Worried about top down problems.

A: GWRC is focussed on collaboration and support. In 10 years GWRC will be looking at whether they have provided enough support.

- Request to make it clearer in the draft WIP about the sediment numbers that are modelled. Targets currently have very specific decimal points that is misleading.

Q: Can we call limits goals?

A: No, they are limits as per the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management.

Q: There is wording on page 26 of the draft WIP that these targets are challenging for sheep and beef farmers. How are we going to do this? Say increased incentives. Who will fund? We're all tax payers and rate payers?

A: There is the billion trees project – additional funding. Timing is good. The intent of the WIP is good. Partnership, innovation etc. Even if the numbers are not that great GWRC has taken a different approach to a number of other regional councils which is a positive.

Q: Have we got a recommendation on partnership for support for sediment mitigation?

A: Yes. Request from attendees that the partnership aspect is very clear.

Q: Request that time is allowed before the targets come into effect to allow for monitoring.

A: Should be doing work now. Don't wait for the numbers. There is lots of conversation about review in 10 years. Slight changes in numbers won't make a big difference. Still need to work together for a big change.

Q: How are we going to achieve nitrogen? The plan doesn't tell farmers how to do this.

A: This is up to each individual farmer to employ the most effective mitigations on their property. There is lots of advice available about best practice. E.g. through industry - Beef and lamb field days.

Q: Will the Committee's community approach work? Can't expect change to happen in 10 years.

A: Dates for freshwater objectives to be achieved are 2040 onward. GWRC needs to look at using their resources smarter. Not compliance officers, GWRC looking at support.

Q: Expecting to see in the WIP why the Committee has chosen to set load limits and not instream concentrations.

A: See the draft WIP.

- Some conversation about the article in the Wairarapa Times Age quoting Peter Gawith about the Committee's recommendations. Confirmed the Committee is looking for feedback from the community.

- Request to be clear in the WIP that the partnership is between GWRC and all the community – both urban and rural.