

Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee – Community Meeting 1

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

WHEN Thursday 8 February 2018, 7-9PM

WHERE Makoura College Hall, Masterton

ATTENDEES

WHAITUA COMMITTEE Peter Gawith, Esther Dijkstra, Aidan Bichan, Mike Ashby, Ra Smith, Mike Birch.

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

WATER USERS 23 water users attended the meeting.

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

- How can we keep water in the system? Through managed aquifer recharge? Natural recharge is happening anyway. Some parts of the river don't need to be straightened and could allow for more natural recharge. Te Kauru Upper Ruamahanga Floodplain Management process is suggesting more buffer zones and wider river meanders.
- What is the recommendation on water races and where is the consistency between GWRC and the Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee?
- Were there any other options considered to manage flow?
- Consideration of the cultural values and the fish values appears to have been extensive. What has been the consideration of the economic values?
- What are the main objectives for the river? Flood protection or river management? Want water for economics and the fish.
- Understand letter.
- Slowing water is an example of a broader discussion that we're looking for examples of.
- Whaitua should support water storage for water winter flows.
- Improve sophistication of irrigators to achieve 10-15% efficiency improvements.
- Night time irrigation can increase efficiency by up to 20% but requires 1 day storage – check efficiency.
- Utilising large storage to top up the rivers at low flows.
- Ruamāhanga at Te Ore Ore is reinstating itself due to the cease on gravel takes.
- River management for the Waipoua. Who is setting the policy? Who pays for erosion and aggradation?
- What is happening with storage and the risk of not having storage?
- Why isn't cessation put at minimum flow and not Malf?

- What about Masterton WWT – putting water back into the river? Has reliability been taken into account? Status of land irrigation?
- Category A groundwater – process for dispute? Whaitua recommendations for this? Ground truthing of model regarding connectivity. Change the onus on who has to prove no connectivity? Need combined approach and not consent by consent (e.g. one expert with one agreed view).

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

- Masterton District Council – potential impact on Queen Elizabeth Park. Is it a recharge or a take? Who will explain to the public the impact on the lake? Impact on the Opaki water race which provides water to Matahi Vineyard. They take the water and store it and this is their only take.
- Farmers:
 - a. Huge economic impact
 - b. Large capital value impact on farmers lives – they need to be able to feed their animals
 - c. Dry land farmers have irrigation to stop the stressors and have reliable food for stock.
 - d. New proposals would mean no irrigation in Jan/Feb.
 - e. Affects bankability as people purchase land with the right to irrigate.
 - f. The November restrictions recently led to no irrigation and it was not nice.
 - g. One third of income is generated from irrigation. Could survive the increase in minimum flow but would be crippled by the Category A groundwater cease take. Want bore level information.
 - h. Water and sunshine are needed.
- Category A groundwater restrictions will have a much bigger impact on reliability. What happens if we don't irrigate at night? Will it help the river?
- New limits will make a proportion of upfront investments redundant e.g. reduction in cow numbers will mean expenditure in effluent and other management investments is wasted.
- Speed of change limits the ability to get value out of existing investments.
- Loss of labour units and flow on effects.
- Need time to get value out i.e. run existing resources down – minimum 20/30 years.
- Impacts – effects on nursery and link to the country planting programme.
- Economic impact of cease take – significant (can't catch up). Over 30 days of cease takes and irrigation becomes uneconomic. Balance between doing something and rapid impact.
- Effect of increased abstraction in summer season. Will water storage reduce available flow? Modelled storage scenario? Top up during winter.
- What difference will a cease take really make to the river?
- Shock and awe. Couldn't afford it. Can't pass on cost – recover all costs at the bottom (excluding from export products).
- More affected by dry and temperature changes – need water more.
- Don't use a lot but when they need it they really need it. Trees will suffer. Trees need water during summer for growth. Irrigation closest to the place needs less water.

- Need water for grounds at the complex – up to 22 days (not currently restricted). Will potentially affect viability of non-profit organisation. Community need – keeping kids off drugs. Short use January to March (likely restriction period. Irrigate every night).
- Protection of root stock – next year's growth.
- Economics – more information – need better information for this conversation.
- Where is our vibrant community going?
- Permitted activity – why is it not measured?
- Changes affect everyone at the same time of year.
- Is MDC going to be affected the same as irrigators?

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

- Reduce, reuse, recycle
- What modelling has been done on climate change? Have been restricted earlier this year than previously.
- What are the alternatives?
- Other sources of water. Storage that provides water for January and February.
- Water Wairarapa dam. If not on-farm storage.
- MDC has wastewater that they want to use to irrigate. They need a consent to trial this.
- On farm storage will cost double per cubic metre than one big dam. What's best value? Already spent lots of money investigating a big dam. Is it going to happen? If not put all the money elsewhere.
- Multiple strategies – best value. There is no silver bullet. Want to slow the water down.
- Integrate supply and use with lots of separate bodies across the catchment. Put the water into high value production that provides economic value for everyone.
- Individual storage is more expensive than one big scheme.
- Stepping stones required to move to more efficient irrigators for a start.
- Changing farm land use requires greater water security.
- Financial support for on-farm storage.
- Harvest water from Ruamāhanga.
- Can we wipe those consents that remain underutilised?
- Opportunities for water sharing between allocations within one area.
- Storage – hills, community and farm. Lots of little dams may make a large dam uneconomic. Pond storage needs to be large enough that you can irrigate. Much larger than current e.g. ½ Homebush per storage site.
- Different crops.
- Different land uses.
- Sub-divisions built.
- Sell up and move – impact on staff and support sector. Especially if go dry stock.
- More plantation forestry? Who pays?
- Or continue with 50% take?
- Over long time frames e.g. minimum 35 years.
- Can't really transition. Potentially rain collection (storage).

- Capturing high rainfall.
- Climate change will bring totally different playing field.

Question 4: What would happen if the proposed changes were introduced now, or in 5 years, or in 10 years, or in 20 years?

- Make the most of sunshine and water and get the best return. Keep more water in the river but reduce the flood risk. Risk should be underwritten by the towns? Look across the region and decide where you accept the risk to keep the water for other purposes. Some areas it would be ok to flood. Invest in our communities, not insurers.
- Do twice as much with half as much water.
- Have an umbrella that allows people to be enabled and empowered to make their own change.
- To have land use change happen people need certainty around water. Getting new people in to challenge thinking.
- Need enough profit in a business to allow time and effort to make change.
- Need a plan that allows for innovation and provides an alternative. The whole community needs to be doing well.
- If introduced now – would sell up.
- In 5 years – Shut down point. Extra costs e.g. crops to compensate for lack of irrigated grass. 20% rise in costs in January and February. Growing crop to get through. Most dairy farms break even. No margins for new innovations.
- In 10 years – age of existing farmers will require exit strategy. Implementing storage.
- In 20 years – looking for big storage.
- Water race dropped 2m in 10 years due to GWRC flood protection practices of ripping beds and extracting gravel.
- Impact now – GWRC nursery closes, needs to move. Impact on rates and local economic impact. Lower productivity and loss of soils. Increase in life stylers with water takes. Lose benefits of community working together.
- In 5 years – Economic difference. Lower productivity and loss of soils. Increase in life stylers with water takes. Too short a time period for innovation. Prime loss of good soils. Land and good soil turned into life style blocks.
- Between 5 and 10 years – realistic cut-off for a change. Nothing before.
- In 10 years – Return farm. Innovation changes kicking in. Some will sell. Recover capital costs. Still need water for alternatives. Allows business decisions. Investment needed to maintain soils – not just falling on land owners.
- In 20 years – will need to find an income which may be non-farming e.g. industrial business. Critical for existing investment. May need to vary on capital that is existing. Step down due to climate change variation.
- Processing options limited. Wairarapa ‘closed’ due to no new water.
- Now – Catastrophic for everyone. Impact on revenue. Closing down rural community. Definite impact on next year’s crop. Immediate drop in income. Flows onto towns etc.
- In 5 years – on site storage – for non-profit hard to achieve due to money. Would have same impact as now. Staggering may help but not much. Lots of places would be sold off due to loss of revenue/income/value. At cease flow hard to gain efficiency at the sports complex. Making

consents for dams and ponds easier and cheaper would help. Rates relief. For smaller properties storage and ponds may not be an option.

- In 10 years – does give time for potential community storage, a bit more realistic than 5 years. May work for property storage. Gives time for some more investigations and opportunity to put a plan in place. There needs to be practical opportunities that there is time to get organised with storage to enable the proposed cease take. I.e. can't agree with cease take rules and then not have the opportunity to get storage.

Question 5: What are the main considerations the Committee should keep front of mind when confirming timeframes for a new water use regime?

- Does MDC know the impact this will have on their water supply? Are they going to be affected the same as us?
- Severe impact on trees.
- Sport ground – financial impact if games are not played. Bore feeds the complex rooms.
- 2 schools are on Opaki bores.
- Would not be viable to continue. Potentially rain storage (numerous tanks and roof).
- They could not transition. No economic viability.
- Climate change impact – if keeps getting worse how could people manage to continue. Different playing field.
- Capture high rainfall events.