

Tabled at Hearing 27/02/2013

**Statement of:**

Mr Philip Smith

**In Support of:**

My own submission (submitter number 344)

Combined Canterbury Provinces, Federated Farmers of New Zealand (320)

Banks Peninsula Branch of Federated Farmers North Canterbury (309)

Federated Farmers of New Zealand High Country (293)

**In the matter of:**

Submission on Proposed Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan (2012)

Section 42A Report Volume 1 –Section 9 Wetlands, Vegetation and Soil

*Introduction*

My wife Sue and I farm, Balmoral Station a 958 ha sheep and beef property in North Canterbury. 125 ha of our land is irrigated (border-dyke and spray) and of mixed flat and hill country. The balance is rolling hill between 300 – 500 m altitude. 80% of our land is workable by tractor.

We re-grass on a 6-7 year rotation across all of our land to maintain carrying capacity. Areas that are not subject to regular grazing and periodic cultivation and spraying (as part of pasture renewal) are quickly taken over by broom and gorse, and effectively lost to production.

Under the proposed plan much of our sloping land or land in riparian margins is subject to restrictive rules or resource consents, making the management of this land even more difficult than it is already. 600 ha of our land is over 15 degrees in slope and valuable tractor workable land but within the zone 'Area LH2'. The proposal severely affects the value of this land, both in terms of future output and value to our business, the land value of our property and flow on economic effects.

*Consultation*

I support the concerns raised by Federated Farmers in their submission regarding a lack of consultation on aspects of the plan relating to soil erosion, cultivation in riparian zones, and burning and clearance of vegetation.

I was the sole farmer representative on the ECan Hurunui Land Use and Water Quality Governance Group. This group held lengthy and wide ranging discussions on virtually all

aspects of the plan in the months leading up to notification.

Despite this, aspects of the plan with huge implications for hill and high country farmers were never discussed. Activities in riparian zones, and what is or is not appropriate within them was discussed at some length, however stringent controls on cultivation within them, or on 'Area LH2' was never discussed.

#### *Wetlands*

I also support the Federated Farmers submission on the definition of 'wetland'. The Plan provides no guidance on the interpretation of the term 'wetland' even though the rules depend on it. How am I to be sure that what appears to be a spring or wet patch taken over by rushes is not a wetland, keeping in mind that even the most insignificant wetlands are captured?

#### *Validity of Area LH2 maps*

The maps of Area LH2 and 'land with slope greater than 20 degrees and subject to deep seated erosion risk' do not reflect what I see on or near our farm. By extension I am very concerned that special controls to control soil erosion in these areas are equally invalid.

Part of the Area LH2 covers and irrigated area of my farm. I cannot see how irrigated land can be considered 'erosion prone'. Land under irrigation never gets dry enough to be subject to wind blow, and is less vulnerable to erosion following cultivation because pasture or crop establishment is very quick. We also direct drill, which further mitigates erosion risk.

I will also present a number of pictures of my farm and nearby farms which illustrate my concerns.

#### *Riparian margins*

It is not appropriate to restrict cultivation without considering what might happen in areas that farmers cannot or choose not to cultivate. A considerable proportion of land on my property is within Area LH2, and greater than 15 degrees in slope or within 20 metres of the bed of a lake or river.

On my irrigated land, some of which is also classed as Area LH2, I have 6,4 hectares of land within 20 metres of the 'bed' of a streams. These streams only flow intermittently, but are still technically waterways under the RMA.

None of the land on my farm is erosion prone. We have not had a slip on our farm in the 12 years we have been here and I am absolutely certain that this is stable country compared to much of the hill country in the South Island.

Inability to cultivate wheel-tractor workable hill country would have an enormous effect on my business, and has been proposed without an appropriate amount of consultation or understanding of the wider social and economic costs, what the actual nature of the issue is, or alternatives to regulation.

Restrictions on activities within riparian margins apply regardless of slope, soil type, cultivation practices and other factors; all activities with a 10 or 20 metre buffer are treated equally regardless of the actual risk.

Plan provisions to control erosion do not take into account the work I have done to look after waterways on my property. We have fenced off the major waterways, including a 4 ha area of natural wetland, at a total estimated cost of over \$15000 over the last 18 months. We intend to do more waterway protection in future. We also utilise a stock-water scheme so animals do not need to access natural water.

Our riparian fences are approximately four metres from the waters edge, which is far enough to keep stock out of waterways and minimise runoff, while still providing for practical aspects of farm management such as aspect of land, slope, practical shape of paddocks, access to crossing points, and the run of livestock when mustering.

Riparian areas that are fenced off have quickly reverted to woody weeds (mostly broom), which must be managed as a pest plant. Eventually areas that I could not cultivate would be taken over as well, which on Area LH2 would result in a 40 metre wide strip of land, that is not only lost to production, but is also a source of on-going maintenance cost (in suppressing broom).

Our riparian fencing was done prior to the notification of the Plan or any other direction from ECan, but proposed restrictions on cultivation near waterways may require this work to be done again.

#### *Consequences for our farm*

Proposed restriction on farming activities within Area LH2 and within 10 or 20 metres of waterways will result in either loss of productive value and loss of access for vehicles and stock across large parts of our farm, or numerous resource consents to be able to continue to farm as we are now, or in a manner that reflects the productive value of the land.

#### *Conclusion*

Our land is not erosion prone and proposed controls to control erosion have no basis, either in terms of mapping that supports them or an issue to be addressed. Consequences for us and other hill country farmers are potentially very severe.

I seek that maps of Area LH2 and 'erosion prone land' and associated controls on activities that may induce erosion are withdrawn because of problems with:

- loss of land to production and loss of value of land;
- on-going maintenance costs;
- increased cost of production;
- lack of evidence that there is an issue with an erosion;
- lack of evidence that the proposed maps and associated controls are the best method to address erosion that does occur.

If soil erosion remains an issue, I seek a commitment from Environment Canterbury to work in a consultative and collaborative manner with farmers to better understand the issue and

develop solutions. The lack of consultation and engagement so far has been very disappointing.