

BEFORE THE CANTERBURY REGIONAL COUNCIL

In the matter of The Resource Management Act 1991

Between

CANTERBURY REGIONAL COUNCIL

Consent Authority

And

IAN KERSE AND NEIL KINGSTON

Submitter

**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF IAN KERSE
FOR HEARING THREE
ORARI-OPIHI-PAREORA SUB CHAPTER (Section 14)**

Introduction

1. My name is Ian Kerse. My family moved to our property at Silverton Road from Southland in 1968. My father started irrigating in 1971. I purchased the property in 1983 and have farmed in partnership with my wife Jennifer since 1985.
2. Upon renewal of our water right in 1999 we were given a low flow restriction on Coopers Creek (based on very limited flow measurements) which has proven to be grossly unreliable. What was considered to be a 5Y7DLF is now thought to perhaps be more like a MALF.
3. In the ensuing years we have had to draw on our equity to maintain a viable business. Our operation is a small property of 159 Ha which requires reasonably reliable irrigation to remain an economic family unit.
4. We farm cattle, sheep and crop. The extra capital required to source alternative irrigation water would force us to seriously consider converting to a dairy operation to maintain a viable family unit.
5. It would be a real shame if we undertook huge capital expenditure to source alternative water and the creek showed insignificant improvement in flows. Decisions of this sort must be based on robust proven science, with actual data.
6. After more than 2 years of negotiations with ECan, in March this year we were granted an interim change of conditions for the next 5 years, albeit at a reduced take rate. We are now on minimum flow conditions as per the notified plan for the Orari section, Table 15. This process has cost us in excess of \$14,000. Overall, since 2001, we have spent nearly \$45,000 trying to address the disparities between ourselves and our neighboring irrigators. The plan provides equity and options for transfers for irrigators within the Upper Coopers Creek catchment.

Some history

7. Having lived with the creek for some 45 years I have observed significant changes in the Upper Coopers Creek:
 - Extensive man-made channeling, stop bank construction, shingle buildup, mechanical shingle removal.
 - Significant flood events – most notably the 1974 Blandwood flood which started the movement of a huge quantity of shingle down the system.
 - Regularly running dry below State Highway 72 (more often than not every year) and in drought years drying upstream of State Highway 72, even before the irrigation development years in the late 1990's.

8. Another significant factor contributing to the perceived decline in the creek would have to be ECan planting the Orari riverbed with pine trees in the early 1980's, on the north bank of the Orari River, 4.5 km downstream from the gorge. The approximate area covered on the north bank adjacent to the springs up to Silverton Corner is 180 Ha. This area of 30 year old Pine plantation must take significant water from the shallow aquifer which feeds the springs, compared to the scattered poplars and gorse which previously covered the area.

What we have done

9. We have worked with ECan and set up a long term flow monitoring weir at the outlet of the springs to gather data to help us understand the behaviour of the spring system compared to surrounding waterbodies. This is because all the reports done to date (Burberry and Golder's especially) comment on the lack of reliable data and the need for extensive monitoring and testing.
10. We have installed water metering and telemetry on our pump well before we were legally required to, as have other adjacent irrigators.
11. We are undertaking water quality measurements on a regular basis from the springs and at specific points further down the stream system.
12. We have undertaken ongoing fencing and riparian plantings to protect the springs and creek.
13. We are in the process of setting up a "Farm Environmental Plan" and "Nutrient Budgets" which will be operational by the time of this hearing.
14. We have commenced being involved with a catchment water users group to work through with various stakeholders the flow and water quality issues of the Upper Coopers Creek.

My conclusion

15. Although I have serious reservations about the "Conjunctive Use Model" and other models used to calculate and predict effects, I support the steering committee's recommendations that we go onto the flow site on the Orari mainstem and review the situation 3 years after the plan becomes operational. I realize the steering group have thoroughly explored the alternatives and have settled on an appropriate compromise, (as long as the expected effects and reliabilities are realized).
16. I hope we will be able to form a long term, satisfactory, sustainable, equitable resolution to the issues around Upper Coopers Creek, based on robust science collected over a number of years, rather than on dodgy fabricated models and emotion.

Ian Kerse
14th May 2013