Statement of:

Mr Philip Smith

In Support of:

My own submission (submitter number 344)

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

In the matter of:

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

Section 42A Report Volume 2

Introduction

My wife Sue and I farm, Balmoral Station a 958 ha sheep and beef property in North Canterbury. 125 ha of or 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.

I was the sole farmer representative on the Environment Canterbury 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.

Exclusion of stock from water ways

I agree that a reasonable level of control over stock access to waterways is necessary to safeguard water quality and sustain the natural values of streams and wetlands and support the efforts of Environment Canterbury to achieve this.

Intensive stock

I support the recommended addition of Rule 5.134A. Because it makes sense to keep intensively farmed animals out of waterways greater than 100mm deep or 1 m wide. I think it is important to get this rule right however and share the concerns of Federated Farmers over the use of prohibited activity status for activities that do not meet the criteria of this Rule.

Despite my support, I am concerned that condition 3 of Rule 5.134A is so strict that it will rarely be invoked. Requiring the activity to be undertaken as a discretionary activity and in accordance with a Farm Environment Plan provides a very high level of protection and there is no need to limit that activity to four crossings by livestock per year.

I see that the definition of ‘intensive stock’ requires careful consideration to be fair and to achieve an outcome that reflects actual environmental risk. It is wrong to classify all dairy cattle as ‘intensive stock’ (and regulate accordingly) because not all dairy cattle are intensively farmed and it unnecessarily limits land use options on sheep and beef farms. In my years of farming experience I have often grazed carry over cows and dairy young stock, and can not see how extensive grazing of these cattle poses any more risk to water quality than grazing beef cattle.

In the interests of achieving a workable framework I seek the following:

- Amend prohibited activity rules 5.133 and 5.134 to be non-complying activities.
- Relax the criteria of Rule 5.134A by removing condition 3.
• Amend the definition of 'intensive stock' as follows: 2. Dairy cattle milking in a herd

The use and disturbance of the bed of a lake, river or wetland
The recommended changes to Rule 5.135, combined with the broad definitions of 'bed of a lake or river' and 'wetland' create an unworkable situation for hill and high country farmers.

As notified, Rule 5.135 specified that the use and disturbance of the bed of a lake or river, or a wetland was not to result in clearly visible pugging or trampling of the land or areas of bare ground. The staff recommendation is considerably more restrictive in that there is to be no pugging or de-vegetation that exposes bare earth. Reasons why this approach is unworkable include:

• It is well known that considerable areas of hill and high country farmland are technically within the bed (including the banks) of a lake or river or a wetland, or are difficult to exclude stock from, and the recommended change will effectively amount to permanent stock exclusion from these areas.
• On a typical wet day, like yesterday (6th May) there would be 'pugging' anywhere that stock walked.
• I have observed that grazing cattle can rip out clumps of grass, creating de-vegetation that exposes bare earth, particularly following wet weather, grass grub infestation, or with new grass (within 6-8 months of sowing).
• Stock need to be able to access water for drinking when water trough infrastructure fails or becomes inaccessible following heavy snow or other severe weather.

To achieve a better outcome I seek that Rule 5.135 include some sensible qualification of the terms 'pugging' or 'bare earth' to create a workable rule.

Stock holding areas
I am concerned that the definition of 'stock holding area' captures some types of grazing activity on my farm.

I have three easily accessible flat paddocks of approximately 6 hectares in area that I use to feed out supplements during difficult weather conditions in winter. Stock graze on forage crops on the hill during the day and are fed out supplements and spend the night on these 'run off paddocks'. In most winters the 'run-off' paddocks receive limited use, with pasture cover remaining intact come spring. There are years, however when we have to cope with sustained periods of wet weather and stocking density precludes the maintenance of pasture and vegetative ground cover, potentially triggering Rule 5.35.

What I do is common practice on hill country farms many of which are dominated by hill country, with small, complementary areas of flat land.

The costs of applying for a resource consent and meeting the criteria of recommended Rule 5.35 would be excessive for what I do on my farm and I would not be able to use more accessible areas for feeding out on my farm at the exact time I most need them. Instead I would be forced to feed out on the hill in wet conditions when I am more likely to churn up tracks and pasture and induce soil erosion through repeated trips with the tractor and silage wagon onto the hill, not to mention more likely to have a rollover accident with the tractor.

I fear that a 'lose-lose' situation will result where soil erosion is increased and I have to undertake more costly and more unsafe wintering practices.

To achieve a better outcome, I seek the following:
• Amend recommended Rule 5.35 as requested in the statement of Federated Farmers;
• Ensure that the definition of stock holding area does not capture 'run-off' paddocks where pasture cover is maintained in most winters.

Spraying in surface water

Staff recommend removing 'glyphosate' from permitted activity rule 5.27.

On our property we have fenced off the major waterways and plan to establish native trees and shrubs in protected areas in future. Regular spraying is essential, both to suppress pest plants and to get native species established in the long term.

I oppose the staff recommendation because it will make it more difficult than it is already to suppress weeds like broom and willow, or establish native plants in areas retired from grazing. It will also make it harder to prevent build up of plant material in streams, increasing the frequency with which these areas must be cleaned out to prevent flooding, which in turn increases sediment discharge to water.