

Tabled at Hearing on 4th November 2015

Submitter B260
John P. Hughes
235 Māori Road
Morven, RD 10
Waimate 7980

I am John Patrick Hughes. I farm in partnership with my brother approximately 520 hectares. We are third generation farmers.

The first member of our family arrived in Waimate in 1860, two others arrived in 1865. Two brothers took over a farm at Hook, they are listed in the 1880 census as residents of Hook.

They set up a contracting business of horse teams doing agricultural work and carting grain etc using wagons. One brother died in 1899, a third brother left the partnership and returned to Ireland only to return a few years later to farm on his own.

Our grandfather sold the Hook farm in 1904 and brought the home farm we have now. While contracting and breaking in land for station owner Michael Studholme, they ploughed much of the ground around Lake Wainono. They camped close to the area they were working, which included Lake Wainono.

My mother, who was the youngest of the family, stated that her father said that the water of the lake was not drinkable. This makes me surprised to hear people saying that the farmers have caused the lake water to be polluted. It is simply not true.

The waste water outfall of the Waimate sewage system (before the new system was built) was discharged through the Waimate Creek. An unsightly mess of used toilet paper etc littered the creek banks right down to the dead arm of the Waihao River.

Harris Beattie books, I am told, make reference to poor quality of the water in the lake. The upgraded Waimate sewage system works well, causing no problems that I am aware of. I make these comments because as farmers we are being blamed for problems that don't exist.

There are three water systems which have dominant effect on the water used for irrigation, the Waitaki, Waihao and Sinclair Creek.

The Waitaki, through MGI system, and also under ground water in places up to Studholme, glacial water has been tested from deep well at the river end of Byrnes Road which was also artesian and also up near Studholme. The Waitaki is a huge river above and below the surface.

The Waihao River, which bounds part of our property, also large areas of water which is close to surface but out of the mainstream. Domestic water wells as shallow as 4 meters. Irrigation wells as shallow as 6 meters of which we have 2. The pipes were put down by a previous owner by using a fencing post driver. We use a hard hose irrigator on part of the home farm. We have concentrated on irrigating small grass area to guarantee farm silage (balage) for wintering stock.

On the farm area on the South side of Māori Road, which is in the MGI area, we have approximately 100 hectares of border dyke irrigation. Today's estimate of cost

\$500,000. To update irrigation from borders to pivots we would have to scrap the borders and buy the machinery.

As we have developed over the years from income with present financial returns we simply cannot afford to take the risk. The outlook looks to be challenging to say the least.

The farm next to the beach is in the process of having water supply pipe line being put in from irrigation race to pump shed on Byrnes Road, distance of 3 kilometers, the cost for shares, pipe and pivot irrigator connected ready to go was estimated at \$7,500 per hectare. While the irrigation would be good, the price is too high. Pump shed, power expenses as with the pipe line costs are shared by three other farmers. The pipeline doesn't supply water to the farm next to the river because we would have to pump water up hill and if in future irrigation has to go spray on south side of road instead of flood irrigation, the logical place to take it from would be the irrigation supply race on Crowes Road.

We have leased Māori land since 1904, the first lease was for 50 years. Today we have still leased Māori land and my brother is a trustee for an area of land close to the Māori Hall.

The ownership of land is very fragmented as families move on. This land doesn't have shares in the irrigation company, but there is water flowing through the Māori ground across the area that we lease.

Māori leases don't pay compensation for improvements. Reason being in the past leasee's have put improvements on almost to the value of the land and got away cheating the owners out of a lot of money.

I am asking that the banning of the taking of surface water for irrigation to be changed, to allow surface take.

Reason for not allowing the shallow take in the Sinclair's Morven drain area was given by ECAN as bio-diversity, claiming they found a mudfish and a sleeping eel. I have seen very few eels. Mudfish I didn't know were in the area until my sister (who is a retired science and biology teacher) went out with spade in water races and drains and found mudfish. I am highly amused read how scarce mudfish are. I cannot believe they are at risk as they are in all the drains. No one put them there and they were only found in 1923.

There are seven ground nesting types of birds.

Tabled at Hearing on 14th November 2015

DECEMBER 2009

I am representing the Waihao Wainono Water Users Society and apologise for the Chairman, John Wilkie, not being able to attend.

I am John Hughes and I farm in partnership with my brother on our family farm on the south bank of the Waihao River on Maori Road. Parts of the property have been owned by the family since 1899. The lower part of the property also bounds the sea coast.

I was chairman of the Lower Waihao Liaison Committee for eighteen years from 1986. We are shareholders of the Morven Glenavy Irrigation Company since the irrigation scheme was constructed in the early 1970s. We also irrigate from underground wells.

One well water level has been monitored by the Regional Council for 37 years.

Irrigation has brought reliability and prosperity to the District which has a history of summer droughts which were a huge problem for farmers of the district right from when the district was first settled. Droughts and their effects are well documented in the records of the District.

Water from irrigation tail races have stopped the river from drying up in the summer months and has also raised the water quality.

The stocks of fish in the river have not been damaged by lower water flows. Before the irrigation tail races were constructed large numbers of fish caught in holes would be lost due to water holes drying completely also from heat and also predators.

Often the fish had to be rescued and released lower down the river.

As chairman of the River Committee, I was involved with flood protection work. An important part of that work is the planting of trees to protect the banks.

With summer flows being maintained by water from scheme trees were easy to establish and have grown strongly, forming good root systems to stabilise and protect banks.

Some time ago a valuation of the river banking system was done and the figure was 22 million dollars for the scheme from river mouth to State Highway One.

The river mouth (Waihao Box) has opened on a regular basis since water from irrigation tailraces has increased the flow during summers. Prior to irrigation water flows in summer wouldn't open the mouth for long periods and shingle would consolidate and often the mouth would have to be opened using machinery to lower water level of the Lake Wainono and Waihao dead arm because of flooding of the lower farm land and drains.

The regular opening of the mouth allows fish to come and go and from sea. Whitebait, eels, trout, and in some seasons salmon, have appeared in the river, attracted by the Waitaki water.

Birds and ducks, stilts, oyster catchers, are to be now found in good numbers nesting. All this activity has increased since the introduction of irrigation water.

Finally, I would like to point out the irrigation company has at all times been very helpful to the river committee, paying for work, or helping to pay for work around race outlets and general drainage work in the district.

The Waihao Wainono River Users Society strongly supports the irrigation water being used to supplement summer flows in the Waihao River.

John P Hughes



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Peter Hughes-Morven

Date flown Feb 1998

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