

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991  
**AND**  
**IN THE MATTER** of the hearing of submissions on Proposed  
Plan Change 4 (Omnibus) to the partly  
operative Canterbury Land and Water Regional  
Plan

**BY** **THE WAITAKI IRRIGATORS COLLECTIVE  
LIMITED**  
Submitter

**TO** **CANTERBURY REGIONAL COUNCIL**  
Local authority

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF REUBEN JACOB ALLAN ON BEHALF OF THE WAITAKI  
IRRIGATORS COLLECTIVE LIMITED**

Dated: 28 January 2016

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Qualifications and experience**

1. My name is Reuben Allan. I am a dairy farmer living on the North Bank of the Waitaki River near Ikawai. I am the Chairman of the Waitaki Independent Irrigators Incorporated Society and a Director of the Waitaki Irrigators Collective Limited.
2. I hold a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Otago in Geography, specialising in fluvial geomorphology, soil science, and climatology. My tertiary education, and a life lived on the Waitaki River, means I have a very good understanding of the River and its physical processes.

### **SCOPE OF EVIDENCE**

3. My evidence will address the implications of the change in definition to what constitutes the bed of a braided river for my farming operations.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF RULES 5.68A**

4. Within my farming operation, I own or co-own three separate but neighbouring properties. Fairway is a 430 hectare dairy unit, Highlea Downs is a 565 hectare farm with a 350 hectare dairy unit, and Grassy Hills is a 600 hectare farm with a 300 hectare dairy unit. Fairway and Grassy Hills have River frontage.
5. My primary concern with the changes under Plan Change 4 to the Land and Water Regional Plan for Canterbury is around what can and cannot be undertaken adjacent to sites deemed to be sensitive due to salmon spawning - in particular the change to the definition of the bed of a braided river for stock exclusion purposes and vegetation clearance.
6. Like Geoff Keeling, I have also experienced first-hand the loss of productive land due to the movement of a braided river. Although it is not something I am (obviously) very happy with, I accept that this is a risk that comes with farming beside the River. However, I am concerned that the new definition of the "bed" of the River introduces a further layer of uncertainty into my operations. Grazing is now a prohibited activity on certain parts of my farm.
7. I understand the rationale behind the Rules, but their practical application is likely to be quite problematic and inconsistent.
8. As an illustration, the aerial map below (Figure 1) shows the river frontage section of Grassy Hills. This section of the farm straddles State Highway 82, and has a large

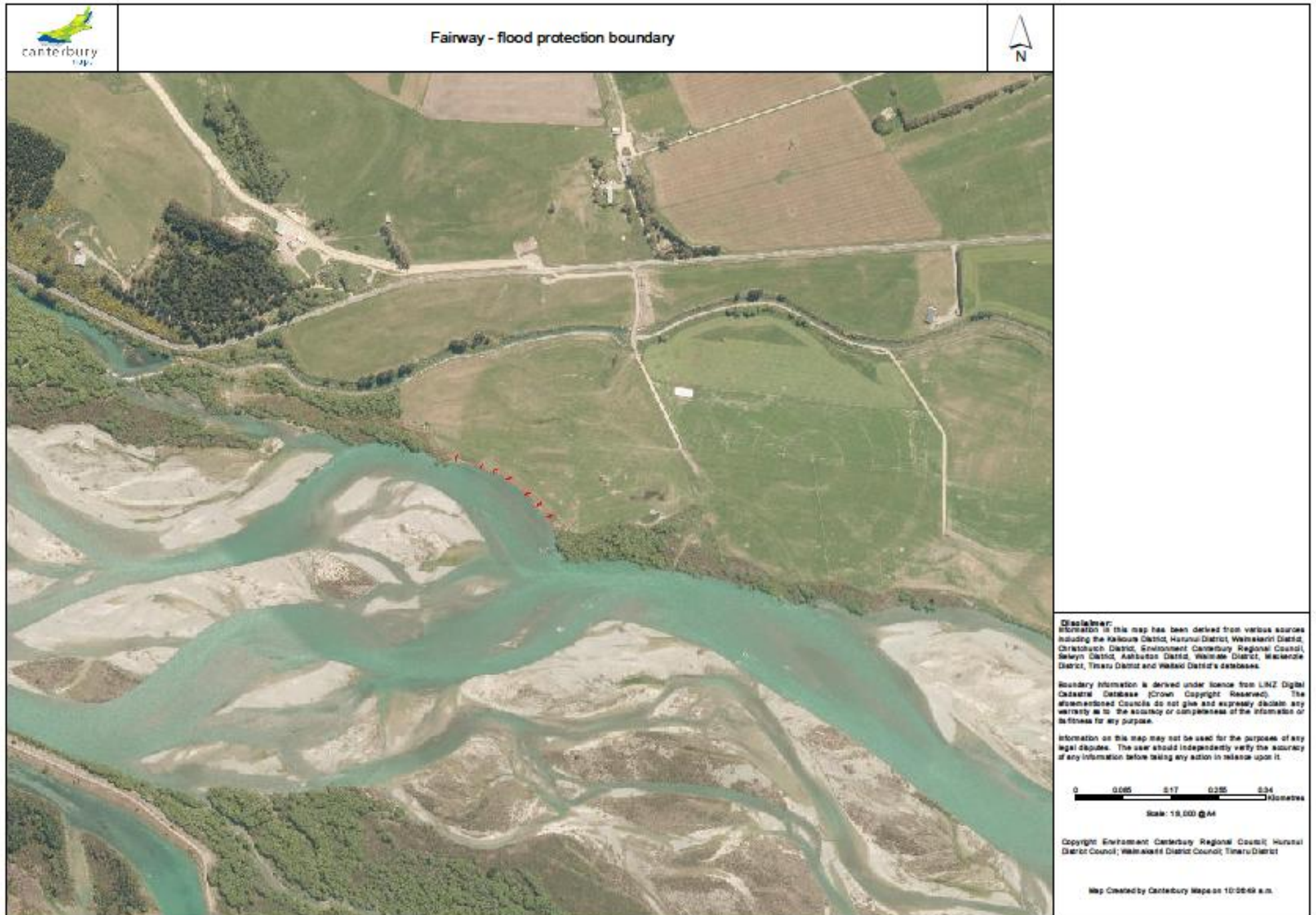
area of willows between it and the visible river channel. However, there are some small channels flowing amongst the willows, so this could be called part of the wetted area and likely the gravel margin. I do not consider the willows and other vegetation in that area is formal flood protection, as it has not been planted for that purpose, nor is it maintained in any way.

9. Therefore, under Rule 5.68A, the river "bed" extends right up to the edge of the willows, and 50 metres beyond that. In Figure 1, the red lines indicate where that 50 metre line extends - and therefore where I cannot graze cattle due to the designation of the Lower Waitaki as a salmon spawning site. Voluntarily, I have never grazed milking stock on the strip of cultivated land between the highway and the River. Now, I also cannot graze *any* cattle in that area, and over the highway to include a thin, irregular strip within the paddocks on north side of the road. I would question whether my stock in those paddocks (with two or three fences between them and the River) would do more harm to salmon spawning than traffic on the State Highway.
10. In contrast to this, ECan-controlled flood protection vegetation has been planted downstream at Fairway. There, around two hectares of land was lost to the River when it shifted its course northwards two years ago. The vegetation was planted after an engineering solution in the form of rock groynes actually increased the rate of erosion. Figure 2 (below) is an aerial map showing the area in question as indicated by the small red lines.

Figure 1: Grassy Hills Farm aerial photo, showing 50 metres from edge of gravel margin



Figure 2: Fairway, showing flood protection area



11. Due to the presence of the ECan-controlled flood protection vegetation, the "bed" of the river stops at the outer edge of that vegetation. I have measured this to be seven metres from the water's edge. So, at this point on my farm, I am able to graze cattle where there is a seven metre buffer (and one line of fencing) (see Figure 2, below). In comparison, on part of Grassy Hills, I am unable to graze stock where there is two lines of fencing, a State Highway, and over 400 metres of willows and other vegetation before the river channel proper (see Figure 3, below).

Figure 2: Fairway flood protection

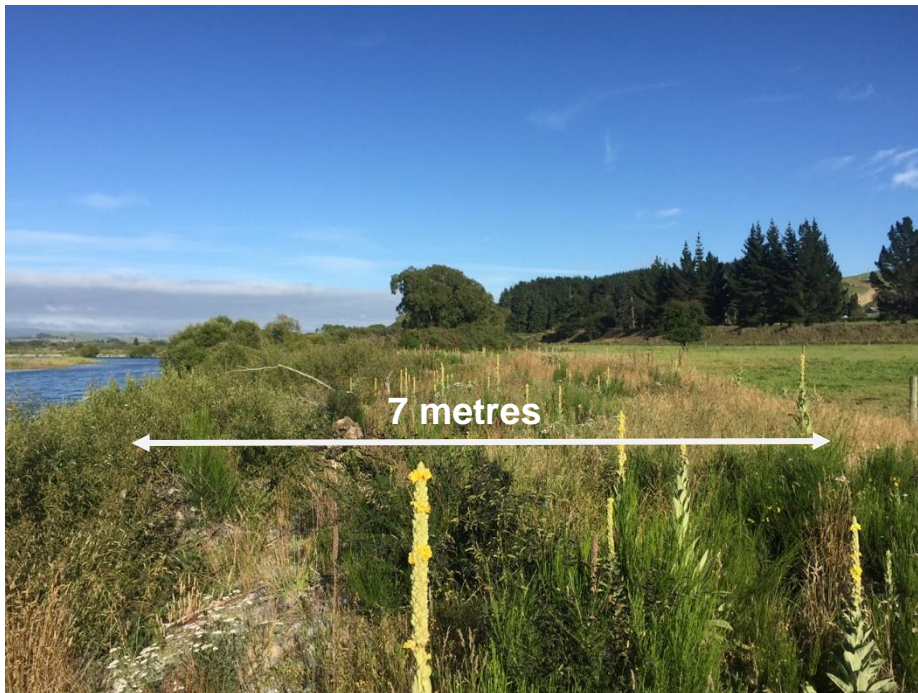


Figure 3: Grassy Hills river frontage



12. Several other farmers on the north bank of the Waitaki are in a similar position to me, as the sensitive site extends for over 60 kilometres. We are not seeking an amendment to allow us to stand cattle in the River, however the current drafting is, in my opinion, somewhat illogical in its outcomes.
13. A number of options would be more acceptable than the current situation. These would be:
  - a reduction in size of the stock exclusion zone;
  - the ability to gain a resource consent to graze within the exclusion zone if suitable protection measures are in place;
  - a change to the definition of the river bed by including non-ECan owned or controlled flood protection vegetation as the outer measuring point; and
  - a re-assessment of the lower Waitaki River to determine whether it is appropriate for (essentially) the entire Lower Waitaki River to be deemed a salmon spawning site.

## CONCLUSION

14. Managing farm land adjacent to a large braided River can be challenging. Although I understand the intent of the proposed Rule changes, in practice they seem to

make farming close to the River even more challenging, and I do not see that this will result in an overall environmental gain.

15. The amendments we are seeking are trying to strike a balance between the intent of the Rule changes to achieve environmental outcomes and the practical realities of managing land in a dynamic River system.

**REUBEN ALLAN**

**28 January 2016**