

**BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONERS**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act  
1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Proposed Variation 1 to the  
Proposed Canterbury Land and  
Water Regional Plan

---

**ADVOCATE EVIDENCE OF JOHN KENT ON BEHALF OF NORTH  
CANTERBURY FISH AND GAME COUNCIL AND THE ROYAL FOREST  
AND BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY**

September 2014

---

---

**North Canterbury Fish and Game Council**

Environmental Advisor – Scott Pearson

PO Box 50,  
Woodend 7641  
North Canterbury  
027 5252 650

## **Skills and Experience**

1. My name is John Kent and I am a retired general medical practitioner. I have held a trout fishing licence for 66 years having first fished the Avon as a 12 year old.
2. I am a member of the Canterbury Fly Fishing Club and still actively fly fish.
3. In 1998, Reed Publishing asked me to write trout fishing guides for both the North and South Islands. These guides have been revised every three years and describe 700 streams and rivers and 150 lakes, 90% of which I have fished. Other books published include NZ's Top Trout Fishing Waters, Fly Fishing in NZ Lakes and Classic Fly Fishing in NZ Rivers in which David Hallett photographer and I won a NZ Montana Award.
4. I have also fished in Montana, Idaho, Washington, Wyoming and Alaska. I have been a guest speaker at two International Fly Fishing Conclaves in the USA. I have contributed to a World Fly Plate exhibition and appeared in two NZ calendars. In 1993 I received an award for Excellence in Conservation Advocacy from Fish and Game NZ.
5. In 2001, I addressed ECan on the degradation of Canterbury's rivers and streams. Soon after, Dr Wayne McCallum and I appeared on the Holmes Show expressing our concern.
6. I have written countless letters to ministers of the environment and conservation, to prime ministers, local councillors, regional councils and the ChCh Press who also published three feature articles. I have addressed Federated Farmers, the Green Party, North Canterbury Fish and Game, the ChCh Club, Rotary clubs and seen local and NZ politicians. I have been a member of the Water Rights Trust.

## **The Selwyn Waihora Catchment**

7. As a child, I often accompanied my father on his farm visits to the Ellesmere region as a grain and seed buyer where he would deposit me either on the bank of a beautiful clear spring creek to watch trout or to feast in a paddock of peas. As a teenager, I biked to the Selwyn and Irwell rivers to fish.
8. I then spent the next years at Otago University, Nelson Hospital, National Womens Hospital Auckland and as a GP in Tauranga. I returned to ChCh in 1998 and was immediately shocked by the state of the Selwyn River and the health notice posted at Coes Ford warning picnickers not to swim because of the coliform count.
9. Until the 1980s the Selwyn River was rated as a world class fishery with a spawning run in the 1960s of 60,000 trout. Now what fish are left cannot negotiate the dry river bed. The only other river in NZ for which trout fly patterns have been specifically designed is the Tongariro. One only has to look at the rows of fishing cottages at Selwyn Huts (now rented to solo parents) to appreciate how valuable this river was as a recreational resource. In my retirement I frequently fished the Irwell and the Selwyn below Coes Ford. However, by 2001, I gave up fishing the Selwyn because of the reduced flow rate and poor water quality.
10. In 2006, Martin Clements, Murray Rogers, Murray Lane and I met John Key and Nick Smith on the banks of the Selwyn River at Coes Ford to discuss our deep concerns with regards to the pollution and drying of Canterbury's lowland streams.

11. Early in 1998, I accompanied world renowned American angler Mel Kreiger to the Irwell River. He remarked that we were indeed fortunate to have such a wonderful spring creek so close to Christchurch. He was appalled when I told him that later that year the Irwell ran dry. My article, 'The Death of the Irwell' was published soon after in the Christchurch Press. Long-time Doylestown resident George Boughton remarked that the river had never dried over the past 50 years when his family had lived there. "When the irrigators start upstream, both the river level and the water level in my well drop," said George.
12. It is a tragedy that such wonderful fisheries so close to Christchurch have virtually been destroyed. Now young anglers must somehow drive to the Canterbury High Country to fish instead of biking to these once productive fisheries so close to Christchurch.
13. Secondly, I only fished around Coes and Chamberlains fords as teenager and had no experience of the Selwyn drying during those times. I joined the Canterbury Anglers Club as a 15 year old and heard many stories of the wonderful fishing in the Selwyn
14. I did fish the Selwyn in the late 1990s again around and below Coes Ford and enjoyed it. But deterioration in the water quality and low flows killed it with algal growth and odour. I believe a lot of farm pollution came from Silver Creek which entered the Selwyn just above Coes Ford.

**DATED** this        16th    day of September                    2014

John Kent



