

From: [Sue Ruston](#)
To: [Plan Hearings](#)
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Subject: PC7 - Evidence for Next Generation Farmers Trust
Date: Friday, 17 July 2020 5:48:12 pm
Attachments: [PC7 - NGFT - Evidence of Dan Encell.pdf](#)
[PC7 - NGFT - Evidence of J Austin.pdf](#)
[PC7 - NGFT - Evidence of R Nortje.pdf](#)
[PC7 - NGFT - Expert Evidence Planning Susan Ruston.pdf](#)
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[PC7 - NGFT - Evidence of Victoria Travnor.pdf](#)
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Good afternoon

I have been instructed by the Next Generation Farmers Trust to lodge, on their behalf, the attached evidence in accordance with Minute 1 to Proposed Plan Change 7 to the Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan.

Your sincerely

Sue Ruston

IN THE MATTER OF

The Resource Management Act
1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF

Proposed Plan Change 7 to the
Canterbury Land and Water
Regional Plan

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF SAMUEL MARMADUKE SPENCER-BOWER

FOR THE WAIMAKARIRI NEXT GENERATION FARMERS TRUST

17 JULY 2020

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

- 1.1. My full name is Samuel Marmaduke Spencer-Bower. I am the Secretary of the Next Generation Farmers Trust (“NGFT” or “the Trust”), and my statement of evidence is provided on behalf of the Trust.
- 1.2. I am General Manager of our family farm called “Claxby”, which is 1400ha, milking 3000 cows, and is fully self-contained. The farm is located at Eyrewell, on the north bank of the Waimakariri river. We employ 18 full time staff plus 6 temporary spring staff. I completed a Bachelor of Commerce (Agricultural) at Lincoln University, graduating in 2005. I worked for NZ Agriseeds Ltd (an agricultural plant breeding and seed sales company) for seven years after finishing university. I am also currently raceman for our own irrigation scheme (Claxby Irrigation Ltd), which irrigates around 2,500ha of ours and neighbouring land. I am the 5th generation of our family to farm at Claxby and my two daughters are the 6th. My great great grandfather Marmaduke Dixon dedicated his life to developing Claxby and the Waimakairi district. One of his main achievements was creating the Waimakariri river intake at Browns Rock for stock water distribution. This site is now the intake for the Waimakairi Irrigation Ltd scheme. Marmaduke Dixon also created river intakes for Claxby & was one of the first in New Zealand to develop irrigation.
- 1.3. Other examples of his commitment to the Waimakariri district was his donation of the land for the Eyreton Church and Cemetery; he was co-founder of the Northern A&P Association; he introduced to Canterbury the 3 furrow plough and the sheep slip drafting gate; and he was one of the first to export wheat to Britain. Marmaduke Dixon’s food and fibre producing (plus community involvement) legacy is something that our family have been continuing to this day and hope to be able to continue long into the future.
- 1.4. While this is a Council Hearing and I am not an ‘expert witness’, I acknowledge that I have read the Environment Court’s Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses, as contained in section 7 of the Environment Court’s Practice Note 2014, and have complied with it in the preparation of this evidence.
- 1.5. My evidence can be summarised as follows:
 - a. The NGFT is a trust formed in 2018 with the purpose of ensuring that current and future generations have a realistic chance of a profitable farming career in

the Waimakariri area. NGFT agrees that regulation is necessary. But we do not believe that regulation by itself is sufficient, or the most appropriate way to get community buy-in. To achieve the objectives of PC 7 and to ensure the necessary changes are made so that the environment is properly protected for future generations, more needs to be done.

- b. Achieving the community freshwater objectives as set out in the proposed plan change: NGFT believes this can be achieved without major social and financial disruption, and should not be determined in the absence of one set of experts; that is the farming landowners. We believe it is important to include in the planning and implementation of PC 7 those farming landowners who are, because our livelihoods depend on it, experts in land management and farm planning. Maintaining farm profitability is what will enable the community to reach the necessary reductions in nutrient losses. Pushing farmers too hard too fast will be counter-productive for the environment.
- c. For that reason, NGFT seeks a formal commitment from Environment Canterbury to form a partnership with NGFT to work together on the types and degree of changes that will be required to achieve the outcomes sought for the Waimakariri. We seek the sort of commitment made by Environment Canterbury in the Lyttelton Port Recovery Plan (Section 5.1) and now reflected in the Healthy Harbour initiative (see <http://healthyharbour.org.nz/>). Like Lyttelton Harbour, NGFT considers that the area covered by PC 7 would benefit from a collaborative management plan for as a whole: ki uta ki tai, or from the mountains to the sea. NGFT is willing and prepared to take the lead in working with Environment Canterbury, landowners, primary industry representatives and the wider community in such a partnership.
- d. Since 2019, NGFT has proactively developed and costed a three-year strategy and work plan. Implementation of this will start in August 2020, with funding from MPI's Sustainable Food & Fibre Futures Fund in the final stages of being contracted. The plan would see new initiatives embedded and ready to move to the next stage. The plan involves:
 - i. Farmer understanding, monitoring and transparency;

- ii. The stretch – the establishment of multiple farmer groups of up to 10 farming businesses to actively explore options for achieving the short-term nitrogen reductions more quickly than required by PC7 (as a learning exercise), through a whole of farm business planning approach; and
 - iii. Future farm systems for sustainable land use.
- e. While NGFT accepts the 'direction of travel' required by PC 7, we consider there are two aspects of PC 7 in particular which are likely to result in fragmentation of landowner support and the potential for disillusionment and therefore disengagement by landowners. They are:
- i. Locking in percentage reductions after 2040 (Table 8-9); and
 - ii. The nutrient management sub-zones.
- f. NGFT seeks that those matters be removed from PC 7 because they are unnecessary. Rather, and as I discuss later in my evidence, NGFT considers that it is critical that there is collaborative monitoring programme to gain a better understanding of the degree of the issues and how mitigation options might best address those issues. This programme should include the work of Waimakariri Irrigation Limited. Such a programme will also aid farmer engagement.
- g. We do not accept that the approach we seek is 'weaker' than PC 7 as it was notified. Rather, we consider that the collaborative approach we propose is more likely to succeed, and in a way that does not create community conflict and disillusionment. Several of our members (both farmers & local rural businesses) are separate submitters and will also be commenting on this.

2. ABOUT THE NEXT GENERATION FARMERS TRUST

- 2.1. The NGFT is a trust formed in 2018 with the purpose of ensuring that current and future generations have a realistic chance of a profitable farming career in the Waimakariri area. A key part of this is uniting the rural community to protect the environment for future generations.

- 2.2. The Objectives of NGFT are set out in the Trust Deed:
- a. Represent all primary industries in our farming catchment area;
 - b. Promote awareness and a positive public image of the farming community by publishing real stories and experiences;
 - c. Bridge the urban and rural divide and unite the community;
 - d. Build positive and constructive relationships with regulators, council and regional stakeholders to work collaboratively for a greater outcome;
 - e. Encourage open testing and reporting of farming information from independent monitoring systems;
 - f. Encourage the use of industry bodies to aid the greater farming outcome;
 - g. Facilitate and increase the knowledge base within the farming community.
- 2.3. The NGFT has a current membership of over 130 Waimakariri farmers and rural businesses. The Trust is aiming to expand its membership to eventually include all of the farms that are located throughout the Waimakariri area, of which there are a total of approximately 350. The current membership is broad and includes farms from across all farming types and associated industries, in particular (but not limited to) sheep and beef, cropping, dairy, dairy support, deer, horticulture, and commercial vegetable growers. Our current membership spans from the mountains to the coast and covers approximately 40,000 hectares.
- 2.4. The Trust has five farmer trustees, ranging in age from 28 to 35 years. Each of the trustees are either farm owners or farm managers. The Trust has a strong and positive foundation within the Waimakariri sub-region and this is reflected in their media presence, farmer workshop attendances, member and sponsor funding, and contributions to regular NGFT e-newsletters.
- 2.5. In relation to PC 7, NGFT has coordinated discussions between the various primary sector submitters about how we can work together on our presentations to assist the commissioners. The trustees have personally read through all the technical reports and the draft expert evidence and have led and participated in primary sector discussions to ensure the expertise of the landowners is well represented in those discussions. We have made sure we properly understand the reasons for the changes

we seek, and that we are satisfied that there is good evidence for the position the Trust is taking.

- 2.6. Not only have the trustees and other members of the Trust been closely involved with the Zone Implementation Committee's work during its deliberations and in starting the PC 7 process, we have supported Environment Canterbury, DairyNZ, and Waimakariri Irrigation Limited with facilitating access to members' properties to run trials, collect data and be used as the basis of for economic analyses and modelling. This has involved 'opening the farm gates', and spending hours at meetings and other discussions developing positive relationships at all levels. NGFT is active in supporting the ongoing work of the zone committee.
- 2.7. The Trust is focused on working alongside industry groups and local authorities in monitoring the environment and development of environmental policy, and on conveying information between councils, industry organisations, farmers, rural businesses, and the wider community. Our objective is to identify and implement practical solutions on farm, and to encourage and support our members and other landowners to adopt these practical solutions.
- 2.8. Since 2019, NGFT has developed and costed a strategy and work plan for the next three years which would see new initiatives embedded and ready to move to the next stage. In summary, the Trust's strategic plan involves supporting Waimakariri farmers in owning, finding solutions, and monitoring their sustainability challenges. This involves a 'whole of farm business planning' approach to help farmers achieve an initial 'nitrogen reduction stretch target' (reflected in PC7 but as amended in the manner requested by NGFT) whilst considering other targets for greenhouse gases, biodiversity, biosecurity and animal welfare.
- 2.9. Overall, NGFT will support farmers and rural businesses to explore future farm systems that will achieve long-term sustainability outcomes for the Waimakariri, providing farmers with knowledge and confidence in their future. NGFT will also focus on telling the farm system change story to the local community.
- 2.10. Significant funding for this work is already available through in-kind contributions, and we are actively engaged in securing additional substantive funding through grants and co-investor contributions.

3. A PROPOSED COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP TO ACHIEVE THE RIGHT OUTCOMES

3.1. The Trust's work plan involves three parts:

- a. Farmer understanding, monitoring and transparency;
- b. The stretch – the establishment of multiple farmer groups of up to 10 farming businesses to actively explore options for achieving the short-term nitrogen reductions more quickly than required by PC7, through a whole of farm business planning approach; and
- c. Future farm systems for sustainable land use.

Farmer understanding, monitoring and transparency

3.2. Activities here involve the development and implementation of a farmer-led extension and monitoring programme alongside a wider community communication programme. This will help our farmers identify, own, and monitor the sustainability challenges they are facing whilst communicate progress to the community. This adopts a 'farmers learning from farmers' approach, and this will be enabled through creating a trusted small group environment in which our farmers feel confident in sharing their experiences and learning from their peers.

3.3. The outputs will include farmer groups, a whole of farm business planning approach, establishment of a farm monitoring programme alongside a wider community communication programme.

3.4. NFGT is ready to develop the farm monitoring programme. It will include practical 'Good Farming Practice' indicators such as: length of riparian protection/enhancement; irrigation efficiency; nutrient use efficiency; and uptake of other specific management practices. Up to date, science based and practical systems and technology, including the use of 'environmental indicators' will be explored and implemented where appropriate. The monitoring approach is focused upon practical meaningful indicators that farmers can identify with rather than the formal State of the Environment monitoring undertaken by Environment Canterbury.

3.5. A communications programme is also ready to be finalised and consists of three key aspects:

- a. Engaging with our farmers to establish and drive the farmer groups using co-design principles;
 - b. Communicating project progress and findings with our farmers (between groups and to other farmers within the zone); and
 - c. Providing the wider community with updates around the project. A social scientist with experience working alongside farmers combined with a communication specialist will be engaged to help develop the communication programme.
- 3.6. The outcome will be a highly engaged, motivated, and transparent farming sector that have clarity and purpose around the challenges ahead and the progress they are making.

Reducing nitrogen losses faster

- 3.7. NGFT's work plan involves engaging specialists to work with the farmer groups to explore and implement options to achieve this target (which is a 'stretch' target compared with PC 7), whilst considering other targets around greenhouse gases, mahinga kai, biodiversity, biosecurity and animal welfare. A whole of farm business planning approach will be adopted to meaningfully explore and disseminate the full range of different options to achieve the targets.
- 3.8. This demonstrates that NGFT is not just doing business as usual. The outputs will include an 'options for meeting the target' guide, which will include farmer case studies, alongside piloting a whole of farm business plan approach within each farmer group. If it turns out that the stretch target cannot be achieved before 2030, we will be well on track as a community to reach the reduction of 30% by 2040 required by PC 7.
- 3.9. The outcome will be a motivated and engaged farming community that has detailed understanding of farm risk assessment, gone above and beyond in meeting minimum standards, and is well placed to tackle any future sustainability challenges.

Future farm systems for sustainable land use

- 3.10. NGFT's work plan on this aspect involves supporting the farmer groups to explore future farm systems, including mixed farming systems and alternate land uses. A

whole of value chain approach will be applied to this, using market insight and an understanding of processing and marketing requirements to explore future opportunities.

- 3.11. The outputs will include thought-leadership workshops and the farmer groups being actively supported in the robust exploration of future opportunities.
- 3.12. The outcome will be farmers that view their future as an opportunity, alongside helping to establish momentum for change in the Waimakariri zone.
- 3.13. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve a 30% reduction in nutrient losses by 2040 (dairy farming), if we rely solely on regulation. And it will also be difficult to achieve this unless we take a linked up collaborative approach with both Environment Canterbury and iwi/ hapu.

Economic benefits of NGFT's approach

- 3.14. The economic benefits of the NGFT's approach are focused on providing future economic resilience within the Waimakariri zone, particularly for rural communities such as Oxford, Cust and Mandeville, as well as the urban centres of Kaiapoi and Rangiora. Proposed Plan Change 7 potentially imposes significant nitrogen reductions upon the farming community of 30% by 2040, 45% by 2050 and up to 90% for some sub-zones by 2090.
- 3.15. Under a business as usual scenario the impacts of this are considerable and far reaching, including the potential for some farming businesses to become unviable in the long-term. I note from information NGFT has have received that preliminary economic analysis forecasts there will be a 25% (\$24 million) reduction in farm profitability by 2040 and 33% (\$30 million) by 2050 in the Waimakariri zone. This will create localised impacts upon farming centres such as Oxford and Rangiora with a 30% (\$38 million) and 35% (\$43 million) reduction in farm expenditure by 2040 and 2050 respectively. Resulting job losses are predicted to be around 250 by 2050.
- 3.16. The approach suggested by the Trust will help farmers better understand, explore and implement solutions to current and future farm business risk through a whole of farm business planning approach. This will help to reduce the potential economic impacts stated above, through supporting farmers to achieve productive and

sustainable land use over time. The flow-on effect of this is ensuring long-term local community resilience.

Environmental benefits of the NGFT approach

- 3.17. A key goal of the Trust is to improve water quality and freshwater ecosystem health within the Waimakariri zone. This is consistent with the government's Proposed National Policy Statement on Freshwater and Sustainable Land Use goals, as well as the Waimakariri zone committee's Zone Implementation Plan Addendum where the following goals have been set:
- a. Improving Stream Health: lowland streams are in poor health; hill country streams need better protection from sediment.
 - b. Protecting & Enhancing Indigenous Biodiversity: the plains area is highly modified with little native biodiversity; plant and animal pests threaten remaining biodiversity; coordination of biodiversity restoration corridors.
 - c. Reducing Nitrates: the drinking water standard is being exceeded in some areas; surface water has elevated nitrate concentrations in some areas.
 - d. Managing Surface & Groundwater Quantity: some rivers are over-allocated; stream depleting groundwater takes need linking to minimum flows; groundwater limits need setting.
- 3.18. Alongside helping farmers achieve their future nitrogen loss reduction targets, the approach suggested by NGFT will also have a focus upon improved riparian and wetland management and increased access to mahinga kai. The Trust proposes that the community set targets for these that are consistent with national direction and PC 7. Practical farm indicators will be developed and used to measure and communicate progress over time against each of the targets. This data will also be related to the State of the Environment monitoring undertaken by Environment Canterbury, again for the purpose of understanding improvements in water quality alongside communicating progress to the community.
- 3.19. This collaborative approach would also have a focus on future climate change obligations and adaptation, aligning with the primary sector He Waka Eka Noa initiative and associated targets. Animal welfare issues, such as winter grazing

practice and biosecurity will also be included within the whole of farm business planning approach.

Social and cultural benefits of the NGFT approach

- 3.20. Given the far-reaching impacts of Plan Change 7 farmer well-being is currently of great concern within the Waimakariri zone. Anecdotal evidence suggests many are extremely uncertain and fearful for their futures. NGFT proposes an approach which is designed by farmers for farmers. It will support all farmers in understanding, exploring and implementing practical future solutions, with an aim of turning uncertainty into clarity and fear into future opportunity. A social scientist will be engaged by the project to help us better design our farmer engagement and to provide advice and support as the project progresses.
- 3.21. The inclusion of Mahinga kai targets proposed by NGFT is consistent with Farm Environment Plan requirements which provide value, not only to the local Te Ngāi Tūāhuriri Rūnanga, but also the wider community.

Summary

- 3.22. In summary, NGFT is committed to meeting the Freshwater objectives for the Waimakariri Zone. However, to successfully achieve these a partnership is required between farmers, iwi/hapu, the wider community, and Environment Canterbury. We agree that setting some initial nutrient reduction targets through to 2040 is required, as this will provide confidence that farmers are committed to making a difference. However, a farmer-led solution then needs to be enabled, through initiatives such as the NGFT strategy and associated work plan, if local communities are to remain vibrant and resilient for the-long term.



Samuel Marmaduke Spencer-Bower

On behalf of the Next Generation Farmers Trust

17 July 2020