

Water Conservation Order: Te Waikoropupū Springs and Associated Waterbodies

Submission Reference no: 837

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Submitter Type: Community Group

Source: Email

Overall Notes:

Clause

The specific parts of the application that my/our submission relates to are:

Notes

This is a wide-ranging submission that specifically focuses on the danger posed to the Arthur Marble Aquifer by the increase in intensive farming in the recharge area of the aquifer.

Clause

What is/are your view/s on the application?

Position

Support

Notes

We fully support the WCO and hope the tribunal comes up with a strong enforceable WCO which will fully protect the Arthur Marble aquifer.

Clause

I/we seek the following recommendation from the Special Tribunal to the Minister for the Environment

Position

Grant the order

Notes

We support a strong enforceable WCO that provides specific protections for the aquifer.

Clause

Would you like to present your views on this submission to the Special Tribunal at a public hearing?

Position

I/we do want to present my/our views at a public hearing

Notes

I look forward to speaking to the members of the tribunal

Submission to the Te Waikoropupu Water Conservation Order Tribunal
On behalf of the Save Our Springs Campaign

Save Our Springs (SOS) is an environmental organisation set up to protect Te Waikoropupu Springs. The organisation has widespread public support, a Facebook Page, and a mailing list of almost 13,000.

SOS receives many comments from the public about Te Waikoropupu. We know Kiwis overwhelmingly want the Springs protected. Save Our Springs asks that the voice of ordinary New Zealanders be respected and the Arthur Marble Aquifer be fully protected.

Save Our Springs recognises the role of Ngati Tama as Kaitiaki (guardian) of Te Waikoropupu. The WCO spells out in detail the Iwi's unique role as guardian. Many voices and many interests will speak during the tribunal hearings. Save Our Springs asks that the voice of Ngati Tama as Kaitiaki be respected and valued.

The WCO speaks of Te Waikoropupu as a Wahi Tapu (A sacred place). The campaign receives regular feedback from Kiwi's and international visitors who speak of the 'spiritual presence' they experience when visiting the sacred place that is Te Waikoropupu. 'Spiritual presence' is an intangible, but is very, very real. The campaign recognises the spiritual presence that manifests at Te Waikoropupu. We ask that the WCO afford it protection.

SOS's primary concern is the physical health of the aquifer. We are extremely concerned about the increasing amounts of nitrate entering the aquifer. We are convinced the increase in nitrate levels is directly linked to the increase in intensive dairy farming. The increase in nitrate levels is a serious threat to the tiny creatures (stygo fauna) who clean the aquifer. If nitrate levels continue to climb, a point will come when the stygo fauna will die and the clarity of the water will be lost. This would be a national and international disaster.

Alongside nitrate, a major concern is the reduction of dissolved oxygen in the aquifer. Dissolved oxygen is critical to the life of the stygo fauna. If dissolved oxygen levels get too low the stygo fauna will die. Dissolved oxygen levels have dropped 10% since the 1970s and continue to drop. It is strongly suspected this drop is the result of intensive farming.

There is a ten year lag between the time water enters the Arthur Marble Aquifer and the time it exits at Te Waikoropupu. Nitrate levels measured at the Springs have increased 10% over the last year. Scientists don't know how much nitrate pollution has already entered the aquifer; nor do they know the way this nitrate is affecting the aquifer. They do know; that too much nitrate will kill the stygo fauna! Save Our Springs urges the tribunal to take a precautionary approach in its deliberations. We don't know how close we are to a disaster! We urge steps be urgently taken to reduce nitrate pollution and support healthy dissolved oxygen levels.

SOS is also concerned about the amount of silt washing off paddocks following heavy rain. Silt is washed into the aquifer and there's only so much space to hold it. In time silt will flow through the aquifer. We are concerned about the toxic effects of this regular flush of silt.

Over the last ten years there has been an increase in intensive dairy farming in the Takaka Valley. We believe it is this intensive farming, with its heavy reliance on irrigation and extensive use of fertiliser that is causing the damage. More irrigation and more fertiliser mean a longer milking season. The result is that production is in full gear when the heavy autumn rains come and wash faecal matter and nitrate into the ground and downwards into the aquifer. The campaign asks that urgent practical steps be taken to reduce the size of intensive dairy herds. We also ask that the amount of fertiliser used in the recharge area of the aquifer be reduced and regulated. Excessive fertiliser use is a major danger to the aquifer.

SOS is very concerned about proposals to increase water rights to intensive farmers. We believe any increase in water rights is likely to damage an already stressed aquifer. SOS has created an online petition asking the Tasman District Council to desist from granting further water rights. The petition has been signed by 12,700 people (27/2/18). SOS asks that water rights for intensive farmers be capped at present levels, and over time reduced.

Save Our Springs believe that it is farmers who hold the keys to protecting Te Waikoropupu. It is intensive farmers who have unwittingly created the nitrate problem. It is biological and sustainable farming practices that can resolve it. There are farmers in the Takaka valley who already farm in sustainable ways. The farm of Mark Manson is an example; (Please view; YouTube <https://youtu.be/BRxIV1wECxk>). Mark has rethought the way he farms. His farm is a dry farm. He has replanted the farm with a variety of heritage grasses and clover. The cows love it. The grasses strengthen the soil and reduce the need for irrigation. Mark limits his use of fertiliser. He has also reduced cow numbers, yet is still able to make a healthy profit.

Save Our Springs applauds all biological and sustainable farming practices which protect the environment. We urge the farming community to adopt such practices and protect our precious aquifer.

Finally Save Our Springs seeks to act as a voice for the 'unseen.' The 'unseen' are the myriads of tiny creatures, the stygofauna, who clean the aquifer. Science tells us there is a vast ecosystem of tiny lives within Arthur Marble Aquifer. This ecosystem cannot speak for itself. Humans must speak for it. If farmers continue to pollute the aquifer, this precious ecosystem will be destroyed and the crystal clear waters of Te Waikoropupu will be lost forever. Save Our Springs asks that the Water Conservation Order fully protect the stygofauna.

Kevin Moran
Coordinator; Save Our Springs Campaign

Footnote; the above submission is supported by over 7000 Kiwi's. Details of the online petition they have signed, plus the petition itself, will be forwarded to the EPA who will make it available to the Tribunal.

Additional Evidence to be presented to the Waikoropupu Water Conservation Order Tribunal

Dear EPA: The Save Our Springs Campaign will be presenting a petition as supporting evidence to its submission to the Tribunal. As of today (12/3/2018) 7701 people have signed the supporting petition.

The petition was collected online on the Toko website. <https://www.toko.org.nz/petitions/save-te-waikoropupu-springs-submission>

A physical copy of the supporting petition will be delivered to the EPA, who will pass it on to the Tribunal before Save Our Springs presents its submission. Here is a copy of the petition:

To: Environmental Protection Authority

Submission to the Te Waikoropupū Springs Water Conservation Order Tribunal



Campaign created by
Save Our Springs



Save Te Waikoropupū Springs group



Kia ora friends; Save Our Springs is encouraging supporters of Te Waikoropupū Springs to sign this petition. The petition will be presented to the Waikoropupū Springs Water Conservation Tribunal at the time Save Our Springs presents its submission. This is your chance to have your say!

Why is this important?

Te Waikoropupū Springs are some of the clearest waters in the world but they are now under threat from intensive dairy farming. Increasing nitrate pollution and increased water extraction are major dangers to the Marble Arthur Aquifer which feeds Te Waikoropupū Springs.

The local Iwi, Ngāti Tama, are seeking a Water Conservation Order (WCO) from the Government. A WCO is a bit like national park status for a water body. It will protect the Springs now and into future. The tribunal who will decide whether to grant protection are asking the public for submissions. The more of us who make a submission the more likely it is that the Springs will be protected.

Note: the following is a condensed version of the Save Our Springs submission. The full submission is available on the Save Our Springs Te Waikoropupū Facebook page or from saveoursprings@yahoo.com

SUBMISSION:

I support the application made by Ngāti Tama Ki Te Waipounamu Trust and Andrew Yuill for a Water Conservation Order (the Order) for Te Waikoropupū Springs and associated water bodies.

I recommend that the Special Tribunal to the Minister for the Environment grant the order, as requested in the application.

I ask that: Ngati Tama's voice as Kaitiaki (guardian) of Te Waikoropupū be valued and respected;

That the spiritual presence that manifests at Te Waikoropupū be afforded protection;

That steps be urgently taken to reduce the nitrate pollution entering the aquifer as a result of intensive dairy farming;

Steps be urgently taken to replenish the reducing levels of dissolved oxygen in the aquifer as a result of intensive dairy farming;

Steps be taken to reduce the levels of silt washing into the aquifer following heavy rain as a result of intensive dairy farming;

Steps be taken to reduce the length of the extended intensive dairy season which is causing faeces and nitrate to wash into the aquifer during the heavy autumn rains;

I ask that urgent and practical steps be taken to reduce the size of intensive dairy herds;

I ask that the amount of fertiliser used in the Takaka valley be reduced and regulated;

That no further water rights be granted to intensive farmers; and after a 5 year period, all water rights be reduced;

That intensive farmers be encouraged to follow the example of sustainable farmers who have reduced herd sizes, reduced fertiliser use, sown heritage grasses, farm without irrigation and yet are still able to make a healthy income;

I ask that the tiny creatures and bugs (stygo fauna) within the aquifer be fully protected. It is the stygo fauna who clean the waters and create the crystal clear flow we see at Te Waikoropupū. Too much nitrate pollution and not enough dissolved oxygen will kill the stygo fauna. I ask that this precious ecosystem be fully protected.

How it will be delivered

This will be delivered as supporting evidence with the Save Our Springs submission.

Additional Evidence to the Te Waikoropupu Water Conservation Tribunal

Dear Tribunal members; Save Our Springs is not anti-farming, we do however believe that the intensification of farming practices in the recharge area of the aquifer over the last 10 or so years is putting the aquifer at risk. We ask the tribunal to view the following YouTube video which shows Mark Manson, a local farmer talking, about biological farming. Mark comes from a farming family which has been in the Golden Bay for generations. I have met Mark and highly respect him.

It's my belief, that if farmers in the recharge area of the aquifer were to farm like Mark, the risk to the aquifer would be greatly reduced. Please accept this ten minute video as part of Save Our Springs evidence.

YouTube <https://youtu.be/BRxIV1wECxk>

Note; this link is also found on SOS's submission.

Kevin Moran

Save Our Springs
Coordinator