Water Conservation Order: Te Waikoropupū Springs and Associated Waterbodies

Submission Reference no: 158

Nathan (Nathan Patten)
Submitter Type: Individual
Source: Web Form

Overall Notes:

Clause
The specific parts of the application that my/our submission relates to are:
Notes
Irrigation rights Natural heritage Cultural heritage Biodiversity Tourism Sustainable farming practices

Clause
What is/are your view/s on the application?
Position
Oppose (Please provide the reasons why with reference to section 199 and 207 of the RMA)
Notes
The aquifer, and the small animals and bugs living in the aquifer (stygofauna) are an essential part of producing the outstandingly clear water. The aquifer must be cared for so that it remains a healthy place for the stygofauna to live. The Water Conservation Order (WCO) calls for the aquifer to be protected. It is vital that the land use above the aquifer and elsewhere in the Takaka catchment that feeds into the aquifer be compatible with the ongoing health of the aquifer and the tiny creatures within it. At present ‘land use’ especially applies to intensive farming but the WCO will also protect the aquifer from other industries, now or in the future. The move to intensive irrigated farming during the last 10 years has an detrimental impact on the above health indicators. A related concern is that most of the water rising at the main Spring has been underground for 10 years! So we don’t know what levels of pollution are already in the aquifer. What we do know is that if we wreck the priceless underground ecosystem within the aquifer there is nothing to replace it with. So the water in the main Spring today reflects the farming of 10 years ago, when there was hardly any irrigation! Even so, it appears the impacts of intensive farming are becoming apparent. For example, weekly testing over the last two years shows the nitrate level in the main Spring has risen 10%. The worst impacts on the aquifer are not from general farming, but from high intensity farming, particularly from heavy irrigation and fertiliser use. There are farming alternatives to high intensity farming, for example building the carbon content of the soil, attention to trace nutrient balance and beneficial soil organisms, and using deeper rooting pasture species. Some farms in the Takaka catchment are already working this way and finding it profitable, showing that there are ways of 'meeting the needs of primary industry' with a far lower impact on the aquifer. This is one thing the Tribunal will be considering. NIWA (National Institute for Water and Atmosphere) has advised on 5 key items to safeguard the health of the aquifer. 1) At the Springs, dissolved organic carbon must remain undetectable to maintain the water’s extreme clarity. 2) The aquifer should be managed to ensure that water discharging from the springs contains at least 6.0 miligrammes per litre (mg/l) of dissolved oxygen. 3) The aquifer and catchments should be managed to ensure that nitrate-N concentrations in spring water do not exceed 0.4 mg/l. 4) The aquifer should be managed to maintain ammonia concentrations below 0.05 mg/l. 5) The 99% protection level concentrations provided within the ANZECC guidelines for toxicants should apply until further research gives better information.

Clause
I/we seek the following recommendation from the Special Tribunal to the Minister for the Environment
Position
Decline the order
Notes

Clause
Would you like to present your views on this submission to the Special Tribunal at a public hearing?
Position
I/we do not want to present my/our views at a public hearing
Notes

The submitter have elected to withhold their personal details from publication.