

# Water Conservation Order: Te Waikoropupū Springs and Associated Waterbodies

Submission Reference no: 68

**Tomas Richards**

**Submitter Type:** Individual

**Source:** Web Form

## Overall Notes:

### Clause

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

### Position

Support

### Notes

I believe it is essential to prevent any intensive irrigation nearby or otherwise impacting upon Waikoropupu springs. These springs are an outstanding and rare treasure of Aotearoa. The springs hold rarely found clarity and purity of water, and thorough scientific research indicates intensive would have significant detrimental effects on the health of the springs, of local fauna, flora and the ecosystem surrounding. Stygofauna form 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%. Unbelievably, Tasman District Council is proposing to allow 70% more irrigation from precisely the area that feeds the aquifer. The WCO proposes NO more allocation! 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. This is the best available information and is incorporated in the WCO. 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 milligrammes 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. The application document and all its appendices are available to read online or at local libraries. The main application document has an introduction and executive summary that give an outline in five pages. The application is built on a close weaving of Maori and Pakeha understanding about respect for, and looking after the treasures of our natural world. The first obligation is to protect and sustain natural resources, and any use must take place within that constraint. Both cultures acknowledge living agency in producing the clarity of the water. There is remarkable ecology, adapted over millennia to living in the aquifer. There is Huriawa the kaitiaki taniwha, who resides within the caves and underground streams of Te Waikoropupū.

### Clause

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

### Position

Grant 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

