

12 October 2018

Waimakariri Zone Committee
C/o -Meredith Macdonald
Environment Canterbury
PO Box 345
Christchurch 8140
By Email: waimakaririzone@ecan.govt.nz

Dear Waimakariri Zone Committee

B+LNZ feedback on the draft Waimakariri ZIPA

1. Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft ZIPA for the Waimakariri water Zone. We can see that a considerable amount of time and effort been put into bringing these recommendations together, and Beef + Lamb NZ (B+LNZ) appreciates the chance to provide feedback on these.
2. Agriculture is inextricably linked to the natural environment, and how we farm today affects what we have tomorrow. B+LNZ is seeking policy solutions that connect farm practices with the underlying natural resources, thus enabling land use optimisation. Farming within environmental limits, and with the natural rhythms of the land is paramount to delivering on our farmers' vision of success "World leading stewards of the natural environment and sustainable communities."
3. B+LNZ's comments on the draft ZIPA are designed to help the zone committee balance competing needs for natural resources in a fair and equitable manner, supporting thriving rural communities both now and into the future.

Part D: Recommendations

4. The rationale on page 16 of the ZIPA references Plan Change 5 and states that:

The zone committee sees Farm Environment Plans and Management Plans as the cornerstone for managing contaminant losses to waterways and for improving biodiversity, stream ecology and mahinga kai through education and support to farmers and landowners.

5. B+LNZ supports the use of farm environment plans (FEPs) as a means for farmers to identify and manage their impact on the environment and to optimise their businesses and practices. B+LNZ also supports the use of FEPs to address sediment, phosphorus, and pathogen losses to water from farming practices. Ultimately B+LNZ would like to see FEPs connected into catchment plans, so that individual farmer actions have a direct line of sight to community-set catchment scale outcomes. There are two priority pieces of work within B+LNZ, aiming to make this reality. The Zone Committee has recommended Management Plans, rather than FEPs, for certain land users; in particular land users who do not require resource consent.

6. It is important that the Management Plans offer the same opportunity to farmers to both meaningfully address their environmental impacts and look at ways of optimising and improving their system as what FEPs would.
7. This is crucial in light of the Zone Committee's following recommendations:
 - a. Rec 1.4 (d) and (g)

That Environment Canterbury implement a comprehensive waterway monitoring plan for the Waimakariri Water Zone, including:

 - d. *Identifying critical sources areas and measuring deposited sediment extent and character, particularly in spring-fed plains streams (Cam and Kaiapoi rivers) and the Ashley River/Rakahuri – Saltwater Creek Estuary.*
 - ...
 - g. *Investigate the ecosystem health of hill country waterways to identify issues and catchment-specific management options as required.*
 - b. Rec 1.7

That Environment Canterbury and the Waimakariri District Council support further research into factors that influence and/or control toxic cyanobacteria growth in the Ashley River/Rakahuri.
 - c. Rec 1.14

That Environment Canterbury support catchment management plans that promote bank stabilisation and reduce sediment inputs to spring-fed plains waterways including, but not limited to:

 - Cam River/Ruataniwha*
 - Taranaki Creek*
 - Silverstream*
 - d. Rec 1.25

That Environment Canterbury and the Waimakariri District Council recognise the Upper Ashley/ Rakahuri catchment, including Lees Valley, for its high natural landscape and ecosystem values, and protect its waterways from degradation by:

 - avoiding increased contaminant losses to waterways*
 - preventing the removal or degradation of any existing wetlands*
 - preventing the expansion of wilding pines*
 - e. Rec 1.28

That Environment Canterbury and the Waimakariri District Council prioritise on the ground projects in the Cam River/ Ruataniwha and Silverstream, including but not limited to:

 - Reducing and removing sources and legacies of deposited fine sediment.*
 - Improving the quality of habitat for mahinga kai.*
 - Removing barriers to native fish passage.*
 - f. Rec 3.9

All farms located within the Runoff Priority Management Area should ensure farming practices reduce overland flow losses of phosphorus, sediment and E. coli.
 - g. Rec 2.14

That Environment Canterbury undertake a programme of investigations and monitoring in the Ashley Estuary (Te Aka Aka) to provide information for the working group's deliberations. The programme should include:

...

Five-yearly monitoring of sediment quality at two sites – present site adjacent to Saltwater Creek and downstream from SH1 and a site in proximity to where Taranaki Creek flows into the Ashley Estuary (Te Aka Aka).

Monitoring of cockles and pipis from sites in the estuary to assess for E. coli concentrations in shellfish flesh.

Establish stations at various locations in the estuary and begin to monitor sedimentation.

Annual monitoring of the sediments and macrobiota at one site within the estuary.

...

8. These recommendations illustrate the Zone Committee's keen focus on sediment and pathogen contamination in freshwater as well as a focus on activities within the Runoff Priority Management Area and its waterways specifically in their recommendations. As the Zone Committee will already be aware, sheep and beef systems tend to be low nitrogen emitters, especially in hill country and dryland systems. The main contaminant losses from these systems can be from runoff, which entrains sediment, phosphorus, and pathogens which can migrate to surface waterbodies. Similarly, the Zone Committee will be aware that sheep and beef systems will be prominently represented in the Runoff Priority Management Area.
9. It is appropriate that regional councils address all of the contaminants that adversely affect freshwater and its life-supporting properties; including nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, and pathogens.
10. B+LNZ recognise the impacts that sheep and beef systems can have on the freshwater through contaminants entrained in runoff, and working with our farmers to identify, manage, and reduce those impacts is one of our core environmental activities. Over the past few years, sheep and beef farmers have benefited from studies which shed light on how their systems affect the natural environment as well as studies which explore practices to manage, mitigate and avoid adverse effects on that environment. Farmers want to do the right thing, they need support and guidance to understand where the goalposts are and they need certainty that they are on the right path to achieve what is required to manage their natural resources within environmental limits.
11. It is hard to overstate the importance of giving these farmers appropriate tools by which to gauge whether or not their systems are enough to deliver the water quality targets that are set for the Waimakariri region. An inadequate Plan could have the effect of undermining work to achieve water quality targets by giving land users a skewed or incomplete guidance on what is required from them. Having sufficiently robust Management Plans will provide certainty to farmers that they are on the right track with regards to contaminant losses through run-off, and reassurance to communities and Environment Canterbury that the appropriate measures are in place to achieve water quality targets.
12. **Recommendation 1.16** seeks to exclude intensively farmed stock from waterbodies. B+LNZ would like more information on this recommendation in order to better understand

it and its impacts, in particular the landscapes that the Zone Committee envisage this recommendation applying to and whether that exclusion would include sheep.

13. Rationale D2.2 on page 21 and **Recommendation 2.3** set out inspiring and commendable goals with regards to biodiversity, and represent several of the Zone Committee's ideas on how to achieve those goals. B+LNZ would like to caution the Zone Committee and Environment Canterbury against policy that would have the unintended outcome of discouraging landowners to share information, and disincentivising the protection and improvement of native biodiversity on farm. 'Stocktakes' on biodiversity followed by required actions determined by external parties (i.e. not the land owner) within a regulatory framework can be disempowering and threatening in the eyes of land owners. Regulatory instruments can have the effect of imposing extra costs and effectively penalising good land owners for having protected and enhanced native biodiversity on farm, while validating land owners who didn't.
14. **Recommendation 2.10** states that the Zone Committee would like Environment Canterbury and the Waimakariri District Council review consenting options to support landowners to undertake indigenous biodiversity initiatives. B+LNZ supports this recommendation and also **Recommendation 2.9**, and believes that council support for on-farm biodiversity initiatives that aren't compliance-driven can add significant value to terrestrial and aquatic environments. In the current regulatory environment there is a compliance-driven focus on contaminant loss to water. This inadvertently promotes a disconnected view of various (interconnected) elements of the natural environment, ecosystems, and that environment's overall intrinsic value. As a result, there is little incentive for individual land users to improve or prioritise biodiversity at present.
15. B+LNZ request that the Zone Committee recommend to Environment Canterbury that it incentivise voluntary biodiversity initiatives, for example through recognition in consent conditions.
16. **Recommendation 2.11** states that the Zone Committee would like the regional council and district council to review options to support landowners to undertake indigenous biodiversity initiatives on marginal land and setbacks. B+LNZ would like to support this recommendation, however it would first like to understand how the Zone Committee defined marginal land. Marginal land means different things to different people, and marginal land to an arable farmer might be good land to a merino sheep farmer. Further, B+LNZ supports biodiversity enhancement through farmer initiated actions. More information about whether these actions would be farmer initiated or initiated by regional/local authorities is needed before B+LNZ could support the recommendation.
17. **Recommendation 3.11** proposes to reduce the permitted activity size threshold for winter grazing across the whole Waimakariri Water Zone from the Plan Change 5 thresholds down to 5% for properties between 5ha and 1000ha, and 50ha for properties larger than 1000ha.. Properties with winter grazing areas larger than those thresholds would be required to obtain a resource consent.
18. Winter grazing is one of the activities carried out on sheep and beef farms that can pose a higher environmental risk. As such, B+LNZ supports an approach to more closely monitor and control this type of activity. However, the intervention should match the risk. B+LNZ would like to know what the Zone Committee envisages as an appropriate activity status for the consent. B+LNZ would also like to know what definition that the Zone Committee has used for winter grazing.
19. B+LNZ is concerned that reducing the winter grazing size threshold will have unintended and disproportionate impacts on systems which do not cause high nitrogen losses to water. B+LNZ runs a national statistically significant survey on sheep and beef farms, which collects

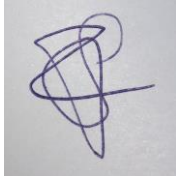
information about the systems. The survey has farms within the Waimakariri region which are representative of the population. Our data has shown that these sheep and beef farms, on average, have seven percent of their effective area in winter feed. This should not be read to mean that the farms necessarily use that feed for dairy grazing. These farms, on average, are just outside of the proposed winter grazing threshold and so would require a resource consent in order to fill the feed wedge for their livestock over winter.

20. This would make the farms consented activities. As consented activities, the farms would also then be affected by the Zone Committee's **Recommendations 3.5 and 3.6**, which recommend that all non-dairy consented farming activities should achieve 5-10% reductions in nitrogen losses to water beyond Baseline GMP reduction by 2030, and a further 5-10% every 10 years until the nitrate reductions necessary to achieve the plan limits have been met. The reductions will apply even where the farms might only be low nitrogen emitters in the first place and regardless of whether or not the farms are already farming within environmental limits. As previously mentioned in paragraph 8 above, sheep and beef systems tend towards low nitrogen losses in the first place and have very few levers to pull in terms of reducing their nitrogen losses further without becoming practically (in terms of managing the pasture growth curve) or economically unfeasible. Nitrogen reductions of between 20%-40% beyond Baseline GMP would make the majority of dryland and low nitrogen emitting sheep and beef systems practically and economically unfeasible while delivering little environmental gain.
21. A blanket nitrate reduction of between 20%-40% for all consented activities would be a crude tool that invites perverse and disproportionate consequences, and B+LNZ appreciates that the Zone Committee would not have intended this.
22. B+LNZ request that the Zone Committee clarify to Environment Canterbury that a blanket nitrate reduction of 20-40% beyond expected results of GMP implementation across the Waimakariri Water Zone is not intended. The reduction framework for nitrate reductions should take into consideration the proportionate contributions to the nitrate losses to water, and how meaningful gains can be made for water quality based on the land use and its environmental impacts particular to that land use. Sheep and beef farmers recognise and are committed to every land user doing their bit to protect water quality. Rules and policy frameworks should recognise that different farming systems have different levers they can pull, and enable farmers to focus on their high payoff activities to protect water quality. B+LNZ is seeking a sensible policy framework that recognises the differences between farming systems with rules that protect water quality, not rules that require actions when a better environmental outcome could be achieved by focusing resources on undertaking a different action.
23. B+LNZ was invited by the Zone Committee to present an idea on how to address low nitrogen emitters in high nitrogen areas, now referred to as the Nitrogen Priority Management Area. B+LNZ did so on 13 August 2018 and suggested that the Zone Committee recommend a 'floor' based on nutrient concentrations that the waterways in each catchment could support, taking into account land's productive potential, susceptibility to leaching, proximity to waterways, and ecosystem services. It is noted that while **Recommendation 3.10** recommends that farmers in the Runoff Priority Management Area should not be required to achieve beyond Baseline GMP reductions, the ZIPA remains silent on low nitrogen emitters and/or land users who do not require a land use consent to farm in the Nitrogen Priority Management Area.
24. It is also noted that the Zone Committee has rejected the idea of a 'floor' (p25 of the draft ZIPA) on the basis that 'OVERSEER® version changes make this option difficult to implement.'

25. B+LNZ invite the Zone Committee to reconsider this. The Portal has been recommended by **Recommendation 3.3** as a means for all land owners to calculate their GMP baseline, however further calculations will need to be made under **Recommendations 3.5 and 3.6**. If the Portal can be used to guide land owners for the purposes of **Recommendations 3.5 and 3.6**, feasibly over the next 10-40 years, then it should be a perfectly adequate tool for land owners to use to assess their losses within the limits of a 'floor; Similarly, if Overseer® is expected to be used by land owners with regards to **Recommendations 3.5 and 3.6**, feasibly over the next 10-40 years, then it should be a perfectly adequate tool to meet the needs of Environment Canterbury and land owners to assess their losses within the limits of a floor.
26. **Recommendation 3.21** recommends that land use consents to farm are limited to a term of 10 years to coincide with plan changes. In theory this is a good recommendation, however in practice it is problematic.
27. Resource consents will expire at the time where Environment Canterbury will start the new plan process, however it could take up to another five years for a revised plan to be finalized. This means that resource consents will need to be applied for and granted with conditions that might not be compliant with the rules that are finalised, years down the track. Environment Canterbury may either be left with the option to recall and review a very large number of land use consents to farm at considerable expense, or have a large proportion of land users and their resource consents left potentially non-compliant with the new plan.
28. B+LNZ recommends that the term for the resource consents is raised from 10 years to 15 years to mitigate this risk. A 15-year term would provide more certainty for the consent holders and allow for a smoother transition to a new plan in future.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment. For any inquiries relating to B+LNZ's feedback, please contact Lauren Phillips, Environment Policy Manager – South Island on 027 279 0117 or lauren.phillips@beeflambnz.com.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, appearing to read 'Lauren Phillips'.

Lauren Phillips
Environment Policy Manager – South Island