

## **SUBMISSION TO GREATER WELLINGTON REGIONAL COUNCIL ON THE PROPOSED REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT 2009**

**To:** The Chief Executive Officer  
Greater Wellington Regional Council  
Proposed Regional Policy Statement  
PO Box 11646  
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There are some basic issues which if addressed adequately as a base for the document would not need to be addressed in the detail.

1. Farming receives only very limited recognition as a legitimate and valuable land use. This is especially true for the Wairarapa Coast. Without farming being recognised as an existing and legitimate land use, which has formed many of the valued landscapes present today, many of the policies are open to interpretation as to whether farming should be allowed to carry on.
2. Natural is not defined – this is a huge omission – Grazed pasture is seen as “natural”, despite the fact that it is completely man modified, it has been cleared of its native vegetation, planted with exotic species, and then managed intensively by livestock grazing. Indigenous native bush is also “natural”. However, with no clear definition of the term “natural”, pasture and bush can be considered equal. I do not believe controls which are intended for native bush should be applied to farmland.
3. Misleading terminology – Appendix 1 is titled “Rivers and lakes with values requiring protection.” At first glance that would seem quite reasonable. If the appendix only included Table 15, that could be the case, however there is also Table 16, which goes significantly beyond “rivers”, in fact it includes many “stream catchments”. Protection which might be deemed acceptable for a river, when spread to cover stream catchments as well, may be an entirely different story.
4. At its core, pastoral farming, as widely practised in the Wairarapa, is in fact all about running a grass factory. The RPS should recognise this. A farm is a grass factory, it is not a park. How a factory is configured to carry out its business, is not the concern of a Regional or District Council, beyond making sure it is a safe workplace and making sure that its outputs are not having adverse effects on the environment.
5. The RMA promotes managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources in ways that provide for social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities. This document gives short shrift to the economic consideration of that

balance. Economic wellbeing is mentioned in Chapter 1 and 2, however, once we get to issues and objectives in Chapter 3 only sections 3.3 Energy, infrastructure and waste, 3.9 Regional form, design and function, and 3.11 Soil and minerals, make any mention of issues related to economics. Surely economics should be considered in the other sections as well.

## **2.4 Integrating management of natural and physical resources**

Page 11, The whole catchment approach is supported. The policy should be to develop management and regulation on a catchment basis as well. When dealing with land based issues, one rule does not fit all situations. A catchment level is an appropriate level to deal with land based issues.

## **3.2 Coastal environment (including public access)**

Page 19, There is no mention of farming in the Coastal Environment. Farming historically has modified most of the Wairarapa coast and makes it what we see today. People highly value that pastoral landscape and view it as “natural”, however it is a highly man modified environment and requires constant intervention from man, in the form of livestock grazing to keep it that way. It is important not only from cultural and recreational purposes, but economic purposes as well. The economic purpose must be recognised.

Page 20, **1. Adverse effects on the natural character of the coastal environment** -“Natural Character” is not just native flora and fauna. On the Wairarapa coast much of what people view as “natural” is the farmed landscape. This issue as written with no recognition of the working farm landscape is overly broad. Layering controls to preserve patches of native bush may be workable. However to catch working farmland in the overly broad definition is not workable. It is not reasonable to try and freeze the working farm landscape as it exists today. Farmland is not parkland. If GWRC wants to follow down Europe's path and pay farmers just to maintain their land in a fashion deemed pleasing to the general population then they have to be prepared to pay for it.

**3. Human activities interfere with natural coastal processes** – this is only the case for (b), for (a) and (c) it is the “effects” of activities rather than the activity itself. Creating policy based on activities rather than effects makes it overly broad and intrusive and consequently will make it far more costly. Policy should be developed around controlling adverse effects not activities.

**4. Public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes and rivers** – this issue is overly broad, access everywhere is not practical. Access is costly to maintain, who will pay? There are issues around security and safety that need to be taken into consideration. I suggest that access issues only be addressed where there is a demonstrated public need and cost justifiable benefit.

Page 22, **Method 31: Engage tangata whenua and the community in identifying and protecting significant values** – landowners should also be explicitly included, without their buy in success is likely to be limited.

## **4.1 Regulatory policies – direction to district and regional plans and the Regional Land Transport Strategy**

Page 81, **Policy 3: Discouraging development in areas of high natural character in the coastal environment** – recognise that the Natural Character of much of the Wairarapa is FARMED, that means it has been normal practice to put in fences, buildings, dams and

tracks. These practices developed the land to the state it is in today and do not require extra layers of intervention just because the land is on the coast.

- Page 82, **Policy 4: Identifying the landward extent of the coastal environment** - On the Wairarapa coast, pasture is a coastal vegetation and habitat, by not recognising farming as an existing and legitimate use of coastal land, rules will end up being applied to places where they may not have been intended.
- Page 87, **Policy 14: Minimising the effects of earthworks and vegetation disturbance** – The effects of erosion/siltation are things that should be protected against. The Policy and Rules/Methods that flow from the Policy should address the effects, not the actions of earthworks and vegetation clearance. Earthworks may have beneficial or benign effects, they may also have adverse effects on the environment. Adverse effects are what should be dealt with so policy/rules/methods that deal with the activity of earthworks, rather than the adverse effects are too broad. They increase the costs and frustration of regulation.
- Page 88, **Policy 16: Protecting aquatic ecological function of water bodies** – is (f) sufficiently clear with “stock access to rivers, lakes”? The RMA defines waterbody to include ephemeral streams, which would be too broad. This is also of concern due to the apparent classification of a stream catchment as a “River and Lake” in Appendix 1. Also wetlands is very broad, the definition of rivers and lakes excludes streams, should not there be a similar measure of size of wetland. There can be very small wetlands that are very valuable, but by being too broad there will be many unintended areas.
- Page 90-91, **Policy 20: Identifying places, sites and areas with significant historic heritage values, Policy 21: Protecting historic heritage values** – It is very important that areas are identified before regulation is put in place to protect them. By unilaterally protecting areas before they are identified a great deal of uncertainty is created for landowners which is not useful. It also has a high likelihood of creating the perverse incentive of getting rid of things before they can be identified.
- Page 92, **Policy 23: Protecting indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant indigenous biodiversity values** – The techniques used to identify areas in Table 16 identify overly broad areas. Fish are identified in a stream which is then used to define a catchment. In the two cases on our land those catchments have been farmed for 50-100 years. The fact that indigenous fish are still present is very pleasing and demonstrates that farming is not antithetical to the preservation of native fauna. While the sentiments expressed in the policy are laudable, the lack of recognition of the sustainable practices that have produced the current situation, may lead to perverse incentives.
- Page 93, **Policy 24: Identifying outstanding natural features and landscapes** - (b) (iii) - Naturalness does not adequately identify the disconnect between “natural” = “indigenous” and “natural” = “what people like”. Study has shown that people value a farmed pastoral landscape because it is “natural” (personal communication following up on “An initial study into New Zealander's perception of vegetated landscapes in rural areas” TG Parminter, et. al., Proceedings of the New Zealand Grassland Association, Vol. 68, 2006, p. 237). However, that pastoral landscape is totally man made and extensively managed. In the study, the higher the degree of management the greater the preference. Therefore this Policy has the effect of trying to freeze farmers into the

current point in time when methods are rules are created to implement it.

(b) (i) Coherence - farming is seen as “natural”, however changes in land use, say from pasture to vineyard or orchard, especially if they were under cover, would go against coherence, but this may deny the ability to change use to make a living.

(c) Expressiveness – is this not created by clearing of land and maintenance of short cover (grass)? Pine forest and scrub are not very expressive.

Page 94, **Policy 26: Identifying significant amenity landscapes values** – Farming provides a coherent and vivid landscape. Pasture is totally modified by human activity. While it may be reasonable to identify farmland as significant, it must also be recognised that it is a working landscape that provides the livelihood for the owner.

Page 95, **Policy 27: Maintaining and enhancing significant amenity landscapes** – While farmed landscape may be identified as significant, it is not reasonable to try and regulate the look of the farmed environment. Farming must have the right not to be frozen in time and treated as a public park.

Page 97, **Policy 29: Maintaining and enhancing the viability and vibrancy of regionally significant centres** – Why only Masterton, what about other Wairarapa towns? The smaller towns may have greater potential for development which could have adverse effects if taken in isolation.

Page 98, **Policy 31: Identifying and protecting key industrial-based employment locations** – Farming is industry too. While this Policy may be directed at heavy or light industry, it is good to see some recognition of the value of industry. The RPS would be better for adding greater recognition for the value of the primary production industry.

#### 4.2 Regulatory Policies

Page 102, **Policy 34: Preserving the natural character of the coastal environment** – recognise that farming is natural and contributes significantly to the value of the coastal landscape, but it needs the ability to change. Suggest the addition of: (h) protecting the right to farm, which contributes significantly to the character to the coast

Page 103, **Policy 35: Discouraging development in areas of high natural character in the coastal environment** - recognise that farming is natural, but it needs the ability to change. Suggest the addition of: (d) Economic values: the place, site or area produces income for people which should not be adversely effected.

Page 105, **Policy 37: Identifying the landward extent of the coastal environment** – Coastal terraces may be part of the coastal environment, but they are farmed, this needs to be recognised and they should not be subject to blanket restrictions as might be applicable to other parts of the coastal environment such as sand dunes.

Page 107, **Policy 40: Minimising the effects of earthworks and vegetation disturbance** – The effects of erosion/siltation are things that should be protected against. The Policy and Rules/Methods that flow from the Policy should address the effects, not the actions of earthworks and vegetation clearance. Earthworks may have beneficial or benign effects. They may also have adverse effects on the environment. Adverse effects are what should be dealt with so policy/rules/methods that deal with the activity of earthworks, rather than the adverse effects, are too broad. They increase the costs and frustration of

regulation.

Page 109, **Policy 42: Protecting aquatic ecological function of water bodies** – The way Appendix 1 is structured it would be clearer in (d) to reference Appendix 1, Table 15 and in (e) reference Appendix 1, Table 16.

Page 114, **Policy 49: Managing effects on outstanding natural features and landscapes, and significant amenity landscapes** – Natural = Farm, this needs to be explicitly recognised and acknowledged so that regulation developed from the policy do not treat farmland as public park.

Page 117, **Policy 52: Public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes and rivers** – public corridors alongside farmland are not cost free. Public access increases biosecurity and security risks for adjacent properties. There is also the ongoing costs of maintaining public walkways. I suggest the addition of: (k) integrity and security of adjacent farmland; (l) the cost/benefit of access and who will pay for the creation and ongoing maintenance.

Page 129, **Policy 64: Supporting environmental enhancement initiatives** – The lack of clear definition of “natural character” is highlighted here. If “natural character” is confined to indigenous species, then the statement that the “natural character of the coast has been degraded” might be acceptable. However if “natural character” includes a man managed landscape then the broad statement that “the natural character of the coast has been degraded” would be incorrect, in many places it has been enhanced. People often value intensively farmed landscape more highly than extensively farmed land or scrub. “Setting right historical activities” - we need to live and be economically viable, we can not make a living out of indigenous vegetation. It is not even remotely realistic or possible to wind back the clock in NZ to pre human habitation. Creating policy statements which have that implied intent is doomed to failure after expending significant resources both human and financial.

Page 132, **Policy 68: Minimising soil erosion, Policy 69: Preventing long-term soil deterioration** – I support these policies.

#### **4.5.3 Non-regulatory methods – integrating management**

Page 141, **Method 30: Protocol for management of earthworks and air quality between local authorities** – this method (a) extends regional/district council overlap and pushes District Councils into area where they are not experienced (accessing effects of earthworks). It will increase their costs and possibly for limited gain. If the method were to address siltation and erosion, rather than the activity of earthworks, it would be better.

#### **4.5.4 Non-regulatory methods – identification and investigation**

Page 144, **Method 49: Prepare regional landscape character description** – good idea – remember farmland = natural so be prepared to exclude farmland from some definitions  
**Method 50: Identify areas for improved public access** – criteria should include significant public demand and cost/benefit should be kept firmly in mind

### **5.2 Anticipated environmental results**

Page 147, **Objective 3 Habitats and features in the coastal environment are protected because**

**of their significant indigenous ecosystem or habitats, recreational, cultural, historical, or landscape values** – as identified in Appendix 1, Table 16 the areas are overstated, regulation will potentially be applied to areas where it is not required.

**Objective 4 The natural character of the coastal environment is protected from the adverse effects of inappropriate subdivision, use and development** - Natural character is not well enough defined as is the case through the entire document. With an overly broad definition, inappropriate regulation is likely to result.

**Objective 8 Public access to and along the coastal marine areas, lakes and rivers is enhanced** – within reason, where there is significant public demand, adjacent landowners will not suffer significant adverse effects, and there is a demonstrated cost/benefit.

Page 150, **Objective 13 The region's rivers, lakes and wetlands support healthy functioning ecosystems** – Due to the structure of Appendix 1 some of the references are too broad, they should be specific to Table 15 and/or Table 16 and clear as to what the expected outcomes would be. For example: There is no loss of the significant amenity and recreational values the rivers and lakes identified in Appendix 1, Table 15 or significant indigenous ecosystems associated with the rivers and lakes identified in Appendix 1, Table 16. As it is written, it appears open to interpretation that there should not be a loss of recreational values on the private land identified in Table 16.

#### **Appendix 1: Rivers and lakes with values requiring protection**

Page 158, **Table 16: Rivers and lakes with significant indigenous ecosystems** – the terminology used and methods for identification lead to some serious disconnects, Of the 87 listed entities listed in the table 37 are named streams (35 actually, 2 aren't named at all) and 9 are catchments, so over 50% would not meet a layman's definition of river or lake. For this reason alone, many people may not realise the full extent to the effects of the proposed RPS policies. If too many entities have been identified then, Policy 17: Protecting significant values of rivers and lakes, Policy 23: Protecting indigenous ecosystems and habitats with significant biodiversity values, and Policy 42: Protecting aquatic ecological function of water bodies, are going to have effect on land that was not meant to be effected, or landowners may not be aware that they are effected. For example, on Castlepoint Station, the Ngakauau Stream catchment and Castlepoint Stream catchment both have been identified because they have native fish. The Ngakauau catchment has been farmed for over 50 years, the Castlepoint catchment for over 100 years. They have been subject to all the methods of land development that were current at the time and have then been farmed conventionally. There is very limited native flora in these catchments. The fact that native fish are still happily surviving in these streams, shows that conventional agriculture is not damaging to them. Therefore it is inappropriate to be placing further controls and restrictions which will inevitably add costs to the landowner and achieve no different outcome. Where is the problem that needs to be addressed? By encouraging more regulation, this will only add cost and complexity to our farming operation. This will provide a perverse incentive for looking after the native fish. Regulation should not be suggested for areas where there is no material threat. I suggest that the Castlepoint and Ngakauau catchments, and possibly other entities in Table 16, be assessed for actual threats, then split into two tables, one where regulation might be appropriate and one where education about their value may be useful. Failing that, I would like to see the Ngakauau and Castlepoint catchments removed from Table 16.

### **Appendix 3: Definitions**

Page 172, **Natural Features** – pastoral farming is viewed by the general public as “natural”, therefore it is captured. I suggest that farmland be specifically excluded from the definition of “natural features”

I wish to be heard in support of this submission.

I also wish to support Federated Farmers submission.