

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act)

AND

IN THE MATTER of a submission to Horizons Regional Council on its Proposed One Plan by the Manawatu Onsite Wastewater User Group.

EVIDENCE OF HAMISH LOWE (USER GROUP)

INTRODUCTION

My qualifications/experience

1. I hold the qualifications of a Bachelor of Agricultural Science (Honours) and a Master of Agricultural Science (Honours in Agricultural Engineering). I am a Principal and Senior Environmental Scientist with CPG New Zealand Limited (CPG).
2. I have worked in the area of soil, water and waste engineering for over 17 years. I am a member of the New Zealand Water and Waste Association, New Zealand Hydrology Society and Soil Science Society of New Zealand. I am a past Chairman of the New Zealand Land Treatment Collective technical committee, an elected position I held for four years, and am currently serving a third term on the technical committee. I am currently serving on the Biowaste Material National Research Programme advisory board.
3. At a national level, I have been actively involved in various industry debates about the appropriateness and management of on-site and small community wastewater systems and their appropriateness for their application in a range of environments. This includes providing on-site and small community wastewater guidance to Regional and District Councils and the Ministry for the Environment. I consider that my expertise is acknowledged nationally. A brief summary of expertise is attached in Annex A.

4. I have read, and agree to comply with, the current Code of Practice for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court. Except where I state that I am relying on the specified evidence of another person, my evidence in this statement is within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might detract from or alter the opinions that I express in this statement.
5. I am familiar with hearing procedures, being certified as a Hearing Commissioner in accordance with the Ministry for the Environment's Making Good Decisions programme.

Background

6. My experience and knowledge of the New Zealand Onsite wastewater industry was detail in evidence presented earlier. This evidence concentrates on the background for the joint submission lodged by the Manawatu Onsite Wastewater User Group.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MANAWATU ONSITE WASTEWATER USER GROUP

7. The Manawatu Onsite Wastewater User Group was a brain child of myself and a colleague working with me at the time. The reason this came about was two-fold. Firstly positive experiences that I have had with a similar group convened by the Hawkes Bay Regional Council and secondly the acknowledgement of a method in the proposed one plan (Section 6 page 6-22) regarding the formation of a Council initiated group to facilitate information regarding onsite wastewater systems. This being:

Project Name	On-site Wastewater System Forum
Project Description	The aim of this project is to facilitate implementation of the Regional Council's Manual for On-site Wastewater Systems – Design and Management.

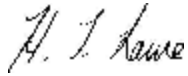
Project Name	On-site Wastewater System Forum
	Horizons Regional Council will establish a forum to aid understanding and implementation of the manual and will undertake regular reviews of new types of on-site treatment and disposal systems.
Who	The forum will comprise, as a minimum, representatives from the Regional Council, Territorial Authorities, consulting engineers and system installers.
Links to Policy	This project links to Policies 6-2 and 6-9.
Target	Two meetings per year.

8. Despite the method in the Regional Plan, the Regional Council were in my view slow to initiate and discuss with the industry what the proposed changes would be and their consequence. As a result CPG (at the time Duffill Watts) convened a series of group meetings to discuss a number of group issues regarding onsite wastewater issues in the area.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

9. The list of contacts for the region includes approximately 60 individuals from TLA's through to suppliers, installers and system designers. Given the length of the region it is difficult to convene a meeting that attracts a large number of people. Despite bribes of a few beers, many meetings only attracted between six and 12 people. The reactions were mixed, with many suffering from apathy and conflicting commitments. These meetings were organised independent of the Council. Council staff attended a couple of the meetings, but not all. The meetings, including venue, were funded by CPG.
10. Many people that have an interest in this industry are of the opinion that their view wouldn't count. Despite the reservations of some there was a quorum of people who were interested in contributing to a submission process. Consequently I coordinated a joint submission from a group of approximately 10 individuals and companies. A number of Council and larger consultancies did not wish to participate as their respective organisations were submitting individually.
11. Submissions were lodged in 2007 and we are now in 2010. Since the initial submission there has been limited communication by the Regional Council over the refinement of the rules and the onsite manual. Many practitioners in the Region are unaware of recent changes that have been made to the rules and the manual, and the resulting implications for their business. Consultation and dissemination of the information has been limited. This is of concern to many in the industry as they thought that they would have been better informed and have been waiting for information.
12. Despite the limitation of communication, many practitioners feel that the Regional Council are on the right track and feel that any contribution they could make would be to help refine what is proposed from a practical workability perspective.

13. A number of the initial submitters are prepared to contribute to this discussion, some of which are represented here today and would like to express their views on the process and the outcomes of the revised rules.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. I. Lowe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "H".

Hamish Lowe

24 February 2010