

IN THE MATTER OF the Resource Management
Act 1991 ('The Act')

AND

IN THE MATTER OF hearings on submissions
concerning the proposed One
Plan notified by the
Manawatu-Wanganui
Regional Council ('The
Council').

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF SUBMISSIONS BY THE MINISTER OF
CONSERVATION**

1. My name is Julian Watts. I am employed by the Department of Conservation as a Resource Management Planner in the Wanganui Conservancy Office.
2. Part of my role has been to co-ordinate Departmental advice on the Minister of Conservation's submissions on the Proposed One Plan.
3. In this statement in support of the Minister's submissions I will not be presenting any new evidence, but, rather, will give a brief overview of the Minister's submissions in order to provide the context for evidence and supporting

statements to be presented at future hearings on the Proposed One Plan ('the plan').

OVERVIEW OF MINISTER OF CONSERVATION'S SUBMISSIONS.

4. For the most part the Minister's submissions expresses strong support for the Proposed One Plan and the approach which the Council proposes to take to address the 'Big Four' and other issues which the plan identifies. This includes support for the science-based approach which underpins the plan, and the use of technology, scientific knowledge and national and international best practice which were not available when the first generation of plans were prepared under the RMA for the region.
5. The Minister's submissions are based on a recognition that, along with established uses, the intensification and extensification of farming activities (particularly dairy farming), pressure on land and water resources to supply renewable energy, and the increasing imperative to address the impacts of flooding and other natural hazards will all lead to increasing competition for use of the region's natural resources. The One Plan is the primary opportunity available to the Council to ensure that such competing demands are sustainably managed under the Act. The Minister's submissions seek to ensure that in the context of such pressures minimum standards are provided to protect and sustainably manage the natural resources of the region. These resources are essential for the long term social, economic and cultural wellbeing of the region's communities as well as being valued in their own right in terms of the Act.
6. In relation to the first of the 'Big Four' issues, degradation and unsustainable management of surface water quality, the Minister's submission is strongly supportive of the clear standards, based on international good practice, which the plan provides, and the catchment management approach, which enables local variations to be taken into account and allows for integrated management of land

use and water quality issues. The provisions for restoration of water quality where it is no longer capable of sustaining aquatic life or recreational uses are also fully supported.

7. On the second issue, increasing water demand, the Minister's submission supports the certainty created by the establishment of clear 'bottom lines' for safeguarding the environmental values of the region's lakes and rivers as a basis for decision-making on competing uses prior to decisions being taken on abstractions.
8. The Minister's interest in the third issue, unsustainable hill country land use, primarily relates to adverse effects on water quality, but addressing the problems associated with loss of hill country vegetation cover is also recognized as a potential key to resolving other issues, such as mitigating the downstream effects of high rainfall events and the need for costly and potentially environmentally damaging flood defence works.
9. On the fourth issue, decline and loss of biodiversity, the Minister's submission strongly supports the Council's adoption of a leadership role in the protection of significant indigenous vegetation and habitats of significant indigenous fauna on private land. Amendments to the schedule of habitats to be protected have been sought, in order to meet the purpose of the Act. The Minister's submission also supports measures to provide clarification for land owners and managers regarding activities which are, or are not, to be regulated.
10. Most of the Minister's submissions relate to the regulatory aspects of the Proposed Plan, but support is also given to the significant programme of research and active management in collaboration with landowners and other agencies such as the Department of Conservation which the council has developed in recent years. Such positive initiatives include SLUI, Farm Business Plans and incentive schemes for owners of wetlands and other rare and threatened habitats. The

Minister's submission seeks that methods are included in the plan which also specifically recognize the need for sensitive management of active dune fields and river systems as part of this overall approach.

11. In addition to supporting the main thrust of the plan, a number of amendments are also sought. These are primarily in terms of improving clarity and legal certainty, particularly where qualifying phrases and terminology inserted in policies and objectives may risk introducing uncertainty as to whether the purposes of the Act will be achieved.
12. These matters, and other amendments sought, will be raised at future hearings when appropriate.

Overall Proposed One Plan Philosophy and Structure

13. **'Single Document' Approach** -The Minister's submission fully supports the single-document approach. This has the advantages of
 - Integration** - enabling the Council to take a more integrated approach regarding the management of natural and physical resources, including the incorporation of the Coastal Plan.
 - Clarity** - avoiding overlap and ambiguity between different planning documents, including the Regional Policy Statement and Regional Plans.
 - Consistency** – by providing much easier access to the relevant plan provisions for plan users, including cross-referencing and consistent style and terminology.
14. The integration of biodiversity protection and maintenance functions into the plan is particularly welcome as an alternative to the existing situation of fragmentation and inconsistency of approach.

15. **Standards-based approach.** In comparison with its predecessor documents the plan takes a more prescriptive approach to key issues by setting clear limits and performance standards on such matters as water quality, water allocation and gravel abstraction. The use of clear objectives, standards and targets creates a greater climate of confidence about what the Council is seeking to achieve. Providing that the proposed standards are adopted and implemented then there will be less of a need for parties such as the Department of Conservation to be involved in RMA processes in the future. This in turn will help in the long run to reduce compliance and participation costs and uncertainty for applicants and potentially affected parties alike (and hence the wider community).

Consultation

16. Alongside its consultation with other interested parties, considerable informal discussion has taken place between staff of Horizons Regional Council and the Department of Conservation on earlier drafts of the One Plan.
17. Whilst the Minister did not submit on the matter, the Act formally requires that the Minister be consulted on the matters over which (s)he has jurisdiction (the Coastal Plan). The panel may therefore wish to note that, from the Department of Conservation's perspective, in this respect the level and quality of consultation has been easily sufficient.

SUMMARY

18. The Minister's submission is generally supportive of the Proposed One Plan. The objectives and policies provide a strong, positive and long lasting foundation for leadership on natural and physical resource management issues by the Regional Council. The mixture of methods, with the emphasis on clear rules and standards, stewardship from within the primary industries, and positive support and

incentives is appropriate for addressing the issues facing the Manawatu-Wanganui Region and achieving the purposes of the Resource Management Act.

19. Thank you for the opportunity to present this statement in support of the Minister of Conservation's submission. I would be happy to answer any questions.