

**IN THE ENVIRONMENT COURT OF NEW ZEALAND
I MUA I TE KOOTI TAIAO O AOTEAROA**

ENV-2018-CHC-000040

IN THE MATTER

of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER

of appeals under clause 14 of Schedule 1 of the RMA relating to the proposed Southland Water and Land Plan (**pSWLP**)

BETWEEN

**FEDERATED FARMERS OF NEW ZEALAND
INC**

Appellant and s274 Party

AND

SOUTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

Respondent

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF
GEOFFREY ALAN YOUNG
ON BEHALF OF FEDERATED FARMERS**

20 December 2021



**FEDERATED
FARMERS
OF NEW ZEALAND**

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INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Geoffrey Alan Young. I am originally from a farming family near Tuatapere in western Southland where our family had farmed for over 100 years. My family has had a long and passionate involvement with farming in New Zealand, since 1880.
2. My ex-wife Lynda and I own the 5400 ha mixed sheep, beef property called Cattle Flat Station, at 1447 Cattle Flat Road, in eastern Southland where we farm with our son Cameron.
3. Cattle Flat Station is a traditional high-country property, formerly a high-country pastoral lease. I had the opportunity to buy Cattle Flat Station in 1993. We participated in a lengthy tenure review, resulting in the freeholding of much of the station in 2008, along with the retirement of some land which has since entered the conservation estate. We have spent considerable time and money improving infrastructure and productive capacity whilst retaining its natural features and biodiversity.
4. I am currently a trustee on the Mid Dome Wilding Trees Charitable Trust. This Trust governs the significant and ongoing work programme to remove wilding pines in the Mataura catchment headwaters, spreading from old Crown plantings on Mid Dome.
5. I have been involved in Southland Federated Farmers for many years. I joined as a young farmer interested in Federated Farmers advocacy work. I undertook the Southland High Country Chairman role in the Southland Federated Farmers Executive from 2011-2017, and then progressed to the Southland Presidency in 2017. I finished my term as regional President in 2021.
6. During my time on Southland Federated Farmers Executive, I have participated in a variety of RMA and local government planning processes including various reviews and changes on both District and City Plans for councils across the Southland region (Gore District Council, Southland District Council, Invercargill City Council), and regional plan reviews and changes (Southland Regional Council).

7. The first consultation phase for the Southland Water and Land Plan began in 2016 and I have been heavily involved in all stages of its development.
8. As a farmer, I am not opposed to regulation, but I am seeing many rules written with no understanding of how they will play out on farm. I hold some hope for how the farm environmental management plan might fix the problem of how to regulate farms. As a pastoral lease holder for many years, I farmed successfully under a similar regime of control from Land Information New Zealand and the Commissioner of Crown Lands.
9. I have prepared this evidence to explain how the restrictions on cultivation of sloping ground are too onerous and far reaching.

CATTLE FLAT STATION

10. Cattle Flat Station is a high-country beef and sheep farm. The Station is also used for hunting, trophy trout fishing, mountain biking, and horse trekking. Less than 320 ha would be classified as “easy” country (that is, less than 10 degrees in slope).
11. The natural biological diversity and aesthetic values of Cattle Flat Station are key priorities for us. The Station includes extensive native bush country cover and a substantial length of the Mataura River. We have spent (and continue to spend) considerable time and money improving the productivity of the farm whilst retaining its natural features and biodiversity. The conservation activities that we have done (and are ongoing) are possum, deer, and pig control, elimination of wilding pines, and active management of native bush. The regenerating bush requires substantial ongoing possum control.
12. We are passionate to not scar the landscape with fences and tracks. Tracks and fences would ruin the aesthetic values of the station and would also potentially disturb the soil and cause sediment loss. As a result, we have only put in half a kilometre of new tracks throughout the station.
13. Cattle Flat Station employs 3 full time staff, comprising 2 shepherds and a general hand.

SEDIMENT LOSS FROM THE HILL COUNTRY

14. The pSWLP seems to have a focus on hill country erosion and sediment loss, but this is not clearly stated. I am not sure why this is the case, and I can explain my own experiences of this issue.
15. Almost all erosion on Cattle Flat Station is natural. The Mataura range itself is highly erodible – due to the nature of its structure and soil type. One stream in Mataura Range that is 100m from the bush edge in the conservation land has never been grazed and yet is always discoloured with sediment after rainfall. This will keep on happening regardless of the rules in the plan.
16. Established flood-banks help to containing sediment within rivers, and speed up the flow of the river. If we constrain a river on a floodplain, people must accept a higher level of sediment in a river or estuary. On Cattle Flat Station we have lost 8-10ha due to riverbank erosion in one location. From January 2021 to now, we have lost approximately 2ha in another spot. We have no easy ability to manage this due to the tight consenting regime for activities within rivers or on their banks.
17. Soil erosion was acknowledged to be an issue in the Southland hill country well before concerns about intensive farming, which to me, indicates that the regional council is misguided. Wilding pines have been a serious issue for Cattle Flat Station. As I will explain below, these pines were planted by government in an early attempt to control soil erosion.
18. In 1947 the Mid Dome Soil Conservation reserve was established on the western edge of the project area and planted with 250 hectares of *Pinus Contorta* and *Pinus mugo* – with the aim of preventing soil erosion. Both species can spread rapidly, with the open tussock providing opportunity for their establishment. Local landowners raised concerns about the spread as early as the 1960's, but it was not until the establishment of the Trust in 2007 that an active eradication scheme was put in place. Seeds from the wilding pines can be blown many kilometres by wind, and they have spread into high country pasture and conservation land in the Mid Dome area. Many millions of dollars have been spent to manage the issue. This

demonstrates the long term cost of central government not listening to farmers.

19. I am a trustee of the Wilding Pines Mid Dome Trust¹, The goal of the Trust is to protect the ecological, economic, landscape and recreational values of over 100,000 ha of iconic southern high-country pastoral and tussock grassland. The Trust represents a collaborative approach to managing the wilding pine spread. The Trust is made up of local landowners and community members, as well as representatives from Ngai Tahu and central and local government agencies.

RULE 25 - CULTIVATION

20. Cattle Flat Station runs 7800 ewes, 2200 hoggets, 150 rams and killers, 550 breeding cows, 45 mixed age bulls, and 300 R1 heifers, steers, and bulls. All cows remain on the hill until the end of August. Our ewes are shorn 3 times in two years, and then go on winter crop on flats or cultivated terraces for 6 weeks, to lift body condition prior to lambing on the hill.
 21. My property relies on the ability to maintain pasture quality on steeper country. We do a small amount of spray and pray on some of our steeper blocks in the front of our station. In my experience with spray and pray, I have never seen sediment run off, because it is never break fed. Continuing good on farm management practices mean that there is never loss of vegetation or issues of loss of sediment (due to grazing or tillage) from the property. We always consider the soil types, the nature of the grazing, and all risk factors - and farm history proves this.
 22. In my view, the restrictions on cultivation of sloping ground are too onerous and far reaching. There are a range of cultivation options, including spraying and direct drilling (minimum-tillage), which should be encouraged as good management practice alternatives to full-tillage cultivation (ie ploughing).
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23. The particular problem with the plan as currently written is that it prevents all forms of cultivation on slopes above 20 degrees except under a restricted discretionary resource consent regime. I think that the plan should be focused on outcomes, not on activities, as my experience with spray and pray shows that it can be done without adverse effects if managed appropriately. If there is a problem with spray and pray, this occurs after the cultivation cycle if stock are break fed inappropriately on that land. I understand that our planner will be talking about this in his evidence.
24. Direct drilling and spray and pray allow significant mitigation of the negative effects of mechanical tillage and should not be restricted. As well as being better for water outcomes, minimum and no-tillage cultivation options are much more cost effective, so should be encouraged to enable farmers to achieve positive environmental outcomes as well as productive and profitable results. I note that stocking intensities on spray and pray land are low, because spray and pray in itself produces low yielding crops, from 5-6 tonnes dry matter/ha for spray and pray, to 15-16 tonnes dry matter for direct drilled swedes, and 20 tonnes plus for mechanically cultivated and precision sown swedes. This is why normal grazing on spray and pray land does not break down the soil structure and produce sediment loss.
25. I can see no reason to restrict cultivation when there are no waterways nearby, and where there are waterways, setbacks and buffers can capture any small sediment loss that might occur, but this is small with the way I do pasture replacement. The requirement to implement good management practices for these areas is far more practical and should be sufficient.
26. The sediment that would potentially run off any paddock is valuable, and as farmers it is not in our interest to have topsoil, nutrients and seed flowing off our farm. We are careful to plan cultivation to minimize sediment run-off. We undertake spray and pray activities in the spring when it is dry to either replant a winter crop or to maintain pasture.
27. Restricting and regulating the cultivation of paddocks or parts of paddocks which are steep will result in detriment to farm production and profitability with little or no benefit to water quality. Further, in practice this is unworkable. Many paddocks on our farm have huge variation of slope within

a paddock, which makes the requirement to manage different levels of contour impractical. But protecting the critical source areas, or the exit points for water from our property, the same level of protection of water could be achieved while retaining the flexibility to utilize steeper areas of the farm.

Geoffrey Alan Young

20 December 2021

Annexure GY1

