

Statement of Evidence of Uli Sirch

in relation to Meridian Energy Limited application for the resource consent to the construction of a new channel to enable a permanent diversion of part of the flow of the Waiau Arm and the associated removal of bed material and gravels, together with any maintenance and ancillary activities.

Introduction:

My full name is Ulrike Susanne Sirch, I have lived at 29 Bluecliffs Beach Road, Tuatapere since 1992.

I hold no engineering or environmental degree, I am a self employed apiarist.

I am speaking only for my family and myself, I have no political or environmental agenda.

I draw my evidence from 32 years of my own and my families observations of the Waiau River mouth. Observations of the wider environment, from reading the evidence provided by the applicant, from all the other relevant reports provided by Environment Southland and from numerous reports given by locals about the Waiau River.

I believe I'm qualified to speak on the matters of the Lower Waiau River as much as the experts speaking for the applicant. In no means I'm trying to discredit their expertise and knowledge, but would like to provide a counterbalance to their information.

All of their evidence is based on paper, in books and knowledge passed on from other experts, which again, I'm not trying to minimise the importance of it, I strongly believe in education and studying all aspects of the world.

My evidence is based on watching what happens and listening to people and again, I'm not claiming it's more important, but would like to think in a democratic world it is as important as the intellectual knowledge provided by the applicant.

To paint a picture of what I am trying to do, I provide an image of the Waiau River Mouth on the 10th of September 2024, so very recent:



You can clearly see how the big river, as it is in flood when the image was taken, keeps the waves from the southern ocean at bay and protects the beach, the cliffs and with that our land and houses.

I have found no mention in Martin Single's evidence to discuss this fact, so it may hold no importance in his opinion but if that's the case I'd like to disagree as from our joint experience and observations a big river acts very differently with the ocean than a little river.

Martin Single has provided a very detailed description of different hapua's, being a type of lagoon and explains that the western side of the Waiau lagoon belongs to that type of lagoon, it's a hapua. The eastern side of the Waiau lagoon is, to put it simple, more static so it is named a Waituna type of lagoon.

He compares our lagoon with other hapua type lagoons on rivers on the east coast of the South Island and shows that these rivers, their river mouths and lagoon systems cause the same problem as we have down here, the erosion of the 'hinterland'. He points out that this is a natural feature of such type lagoons and shows pictures of it.

I would like to disagree with his comparison as the part of the Waiau lagoon he compares to the natural erosion processes at these rivers, is the eastern side of the lagoon, the Waituna type lagoon.

To put it simple, he compares historic erosion in the static side of the lagoon with historic erosion at other rivers. As he went to great length to point out the difference in the type of lagoon systems (hapua vs. waituna) I have to assume that this is important. Considering he's referring to the waituna lagoon I have to disregard this evidence as it's not relevant to our situation. Our side of the lagoon is a hapua and with that acts totally different to a waituna type lagoon.

Numerous people have also been concerned by Mr. Single comparing the Waiau River to other rivers on the East Coast of the South Island, as

1. None of these rivers have had 95% of the water taken away and with that there is no comparison in NZ. This is a very important fact and it should not be omitted of any study or discussion paper on the Waiau River, even if the matter of discussion is 'only' a new channel above the MLC. So any comparison to any other river is at best only a confusion of the issue.

In the evidence of the applicant there is several acknowledgements of the sediment carrying ability of the Waiau River, namely that it is in this regard classified a 'small' river as it does not shift much sediment. However there is no mention of the sediment carrying ability of the Waiau River before the MLC was operational.

2. The East Coast rivers run into a very different South Pacific Ocean than the Waiau River does, which is exposed to a far rougher climate, it seems an apple with pears comparison.

Finally I would like to state that all this so far relates mostly to the problem of the Waiau having been reduced to a stream rather than being a river and not so much to the matter of constructing a new channel, or so it seems. In my view both cannot be handle separately, any further interference in the Lower Waiau River has to be seen in context with the wider picture, i.e. the whole river and its changed state has to be taken into consideration.

The new channel will give Meridian more control over the flows down the LWR. It will give them the chance to put more flushing flows down the river which for its health would be a great thing. It will give them the chance to restrict the flow more and for longer period of times.

This will give them more power of what will happen further downstream and I have not seen anything in the evidence provided to make me believe that this new channel will definitely have no

impact on the types of flows we will be getting down here at the river mouth and will have no impact on any further erosion.

I believe the new channel will have to be seen in connection with the upcoming consent application in 2031, as it is all part of the same river.

A doctor does not operate on one's arm without taken the blood pressure into account, a gardener does not plant one onion without thinking of the whole garden bed, an architect does not tell the builder to put a different window in a house without looking at the whole house.

A river is complex and does deserve as much respect and consideration from us as any of the above examples.

I strongly believe that the consent should not be given now, but integrated into the next consent application in 2031, which possibly could be pulled forward, as it is important to Meridian and the New Zealand public.