

# Resource Consent submission

To: The Chief Executive  
Environment Southland  
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**Date** 03/09/2024 08:53  
**Online reference number** RC240904294

**Full name of submitter** Justin Koenig  
**Postal address** Section 53  
**Contact phone number**  
**Email**

## Applicant details

**Name of applicant** Te Runanga o Awarua, Department of Conservation and Environment Southland  
**Activity location** Waituna Lagoon Opening  
**Application number** APP-20242456

## Submission details

**My submission relates to the whole application** Yes  
**Submission uploaded** Waituna Catchment Submission - September 2024.pdf (45 kb)  
**I am a trade competitor of the applicant (for the purposes of section 308B of the Resource Management Act 1991)** No

For now  
& our future



## Outcome sought

**I wish Environment Southland to make the following decision** To oppose the application.

**Why I wish Environment Southland to make this decision** I do not agree with the proposed trigger heights and timing associated with the management and health of the Waituna Lagoon. In my opinion, what has been proposed will be to the detriment of the lagoon and blame will then be put on the surrounding community.

## Hearing details

**I wish to be heard in support of my submission** Yes

**I would consider presenting a joint case if others make a similar submission** Yes

**I wish to be involved in any pre-hearing meeting that may be held for this application** No

## Request for independent commissioner/s

**I request pursuant to section 100A of the Resource Management Act 1991, that Environment Southland delegates its functions, powers, and duties to hear and decide the application to 1 or more hearings commissioners who are not members of Environment Southland**

**I understand I will be liable to meet or contribute to the costs of the hearings commissioner or commissioners**

## Confirmation

**I will serve a copy of my submission on the applicant and I confirm all of the above information is correct**

For **now**  
& **our future**



## **Waituna Catchment Submission – Justin Koenig**

This is the first time that I am putting in a personal submission. This, in itself, should be an indication of my disagreement of the applicants' provisions within their application.

I am a dairy farmer within the Waituna Catchment. We have been farming for eighteen years on Kapuka South Road.

I have actively been involved with meetings and the future of the lagoon since 2008. Within our business, we have changed and adapted our practices for the benefit of the environment and Waituna Lagoon.

My understanding has been that ruppia is unique to Eastern coastline lagoons and mangroves around the world. This was highlighted by a Canadian scientist in 2009 at a meeting that I attended at the Gorge Road Country Club.

I have always taken it upon myself, as a custodian or caretaker of the land on which I farm, to be able to play my part in the preservation of the ruppia and to help it thrive going forward.

Apart from farming in the community, my children and I occasionally go fishing at the lagoon and have been at the opening site of the lagoon when the lagoon is opened to the sea and have witnessed an outgoing tide and the flushing of the lagoon with the clean, clear water going over the gravel and out to the sea with the sea run trout, jumping out of the water and also catching some very impressive fish. When you see the clean water running over the gravel and the flushing process taking place, it makes you feel like the lagoon is healthy and it is quite a moving experience seeing that happen. It gave me a spiritual feeling and witnessing something good. Looking at the lagoon in December of 2023, you get the total opposite and morbid feeling that the lagoon is struggling, stagnant and it was not a nice feeling. It felt septic and this is so disappointing.

I have not seen the new bridge that goes under water at the proposed, but it still doesn't make sense to me why we would build a new bridge that goes underwater at the proposed new levels.

Therefore with the intentions of this new proposal of the lagoon being at a level of 2.2m as a trigger point to initiate whether it needs to be opened or not, I believe, does not leave much of a window to get organised, to arrange equipment and authorisation to get the opening done. I believe that the trigger point should be lower so that at 2.2m the lagoon is being opened. I also believe that there should be a process put in place where the

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lagoon is opened at a level around 2m, to be able to have the head of water to flush it out. The lagoon was left for way too long before and at the end of January 2024, when it was opened at a lower level, which did help the lagoon get flushed out and stopped it from having an algae bloom. However, I think if you manage the opening around a higher level, the flushing has a better effect. I believe that you should be opening the lagoon with a bigger head of water behind it and getting a better opportunity of flushing the nutrients out.

Also, leaving the lagoon at higher levels, I believe, adds more sediment through the subsidiary creeks that feed into the lagoon being at higher levels and allowing their banks to collapse in and that contributes to sediment in the lagoon. I would also like to bring up that I would love to see the lagoon at a healthy and pristine condition but the times that we live in, with agriculture in the catchment, we must manage those nutrients, rather than use a system that would suit having no nutrients. An analogy would be, that I look at it the same way as sugar. We have sugar in our diets. We have to manage our sugar intake, to avoid diabetes. The realisation of not having sugar in our diets, in this day and age, is clearly unrealistic but if we do not manage our sugar intake, accordingly, getting diabetes is inevitable. If we do not manage the nutrient loading in the lagoon, inevitably there will be nutrient loading via agricultural practices around the lagoon, the lagoon will get unhealthy, just like a human body gets unhealthy from sugar, the lagoon will do the same. We have to manage our sugar intake and how we burn sugar within our system by exercising more frequently. I believe that this comparison should be made with the lagoon that in an ideal world where we are all striving towards a pristine and healthy lagoon, I think that if there was no farming or community to worry about, these methods would work. However, with the nutrients within the catchment, I think that we all have to have a collaborative approach of how to manage the lagoon. I believe that the 2.2m trigger level is too high. I also haven't seen any evidence around why this 2.2m trigger level has been made and therefore I cannot agree as to why we are taking on this method where in the last 120 years the lagoon has been managed in a certain way and even as agriculture has evolved within the area, until that scare in January 2024, we've done the best of what we've had to keep the lagoon from deteriorating. I feel that using that trigger level of 2.2m and not opening the lagoon as frequently will be to the demise or detriment of the lagoon.

I am also concerned that past knowledge that has been consumed by the previous consent holder is not being acknowledged.