

Resource Consent submission

To: The Chief Executive
Environment Southland
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Online reference number RC240906324

Full name of submitter Katrina Robertson
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Applicant details

Name of applicant Te Rūnanga o Awarua, Department of Conservation, and Environment Southland (APP-20242456)
Activity location Waituna Lagoon
Application number APP-20242456

Submission details

My submission relates to the whole application Yes
Details of my submission I submit the following:

- a 5-year review of the effectiveness of the permit is too long to wait to act if there are issues regarding the conditions of the consent whether that's with regards to lagoon health, fish or bird populations or catchment management. The ecological or financial impact of waiting 5 years for a review could be

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disastrous. There are many years of monitoring data available that can be compared and discussed on an on-going annual basis to track the effectiveness of the conditions, it doesn't need to be an onerous, time-consuming or costly process.

- the consent term of 15 years is too long for quite a major change to both lagoon and catchment management when the impacts of this change on a large number of values for the area are quite unknown;

- membership of the Science Advisory Group needs to encompass a range of expertise including both lagoon management and catchment management to enable a well-rounded discussion about the impacts of lagoon opening events because the catchment and lagoon are interrelated.

What does suitably qualified representative mean i.e. what are the criteria? And who pays for the representative for the Lake Waituna Control Association (as they are not an organisation)?

- monitoring needs to look at the bigger picture of the effects of higher trigger levels as this is quite a change for the lagoon and catchment. I suggest it also needs to include:

- the effects on fringing wetland vegetation and adjacent farmland vegetation as 2.5m is quite a lot higher than the system has adapted to over the last 120 or so years;

- presence or absence of wading bird populations using the lagoon, considering the original application for Ramsar status for Waituna Wetlands noted that a significant feature was the number and diversity of migratory waders which are considered rare visitors in New Zealand which visit the wetland. I acknowledge there may be habitat nearby that they can utilise, however they are also part of the ecology of Waituna;

- the number of displaced birds due to habitat changes, as with the high water levels in recent months locals have already noted a higher number of birds inhabiting farmland which may impact on production and financial viability of properties;

- actual (not modelled) hydraulic impact of impeded drainage on farmland with the higher trigger levels which would result in blocking of drains and subsequent impacts on production and financial viability of properties close to the lagoon; and

- the number of days that public access is limited to not only the DOC walking track (i.e. due to Waghorn's Road and the bridge on it being underwater) at the lagoon (which is part of the Southern Scenic Route and a tourist attraction), but also the land purchased by the Te Wai Parera Trust at Pikiraurahi, Te Pā Mahika Kai. If the high water levels in recent months are anything to go by, some of the activities originally planned for this property may need to be changed;

- there doesn't appear to be a clear decision-making process for the three organisations, which have different responsibilities and perhaps conflicting roles at times, to reach agreement.

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Te Taiao Tonga

Submission uploaded No
I am a trade competitor of the applicant (for the purposes of section 308B of the Resource Management Act 1991) No

Outcome sought

I wish Environment Southland to make the following decision To oppose the application.
Why I wish Environment Southland to make this decision Further to the above information, the consent period which has been applied for is too long given the lack of knowledge of the effects of higher trigger levels on ecological, cultural, recreational and economic values.
There needs to be clarification about how decisions will be agreed upon whether or not the lagoon is opened once a trigger level is reached, as the three organisations have different responsibilities.

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 Yes

Confirmation

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

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