

Resource Consent submission

To: The Chief Executive
Environment Southland
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Date 03/09/2024 11:36
Online reference number RC240904966

Full name of submitter Winy van Rossum
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Applicant details

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

Submission details

My submission relates to the whole application Yes
Submission uploaded Submission Waituna Lagoon - 3-9-2024.pdf (122 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 See Submission

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

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



**SUBMISSION TO ENVIRONMENT SOUTHLAND ON NOTIFIED
RESOURCE CONSENT APPLICATION FOR THE PERIODIC OPENING
OF WAITUNA LAGOON (reference APP-20242456)**

As a community member and a land owner, we are opposed to the application as we believe it will have a negative impact on the community and the health of the Waituna lagoon.

Over the last 15 years, there has been long debates and discussions regarding the health of the Ruppia in the Waituna lagoon. As stated by DOC in the report card 2022 safe guarding Ruppia in Waituna Lagoon, Ruppia plays a crucial role in keeping Waituna Lagoon healthy. If plant communities collapse, the lagoon is at risk of becoming degraded, with poor water quality and algal blooms. Stated in an article by living water, Ruppia is sensitive to water levels, salty conditions during spring germination, nutrients and water clarity. Therefore, Ruppia is highly sensitive plant and needs to be looked after. However, with this new consent proposal there is no indication if Ruppia can withstand the 2.5 water level. This was proven when the levels of the lagoon were granted to be as high as 2.2m and this year the lagoon wasn't able to be opened until the level was more like 2.3m. This had a detrimentally effect on the Ruppia essentially killing the plant that represents a healthy status of the Waituna lagoon. Throughout the last 15 years, Ruppia has thrived in varies water level conditions which is proven in a DOC technical report on vegetation status in the Waituna lagoon 2023. However, there is only one time recorded in Mid 2011 where the water level was above 2.5m and there is no evidence that Ruppia did thrive in this period. In this consent application, there is no evidence stated by Environment Southland, Department of Conservation and Te Runanga o Awarua that Ruppia survives with a water level higher then the previous resource consent of 2.2m.

Furthermore, the Waituna lagoon plays a significant role in Southland's biodiversity and its environmental importance led to its designation as a Ramsar Wetland of International Significance in 1976. Locals and international travellers visit the Waituna lagoon often because it is recognised international as a recreational area for walking, bird watching and fishing. If the levels are increased to 2.5m, the access to the walking track will be significantly limited. Already at the 2.2m level there has been multiple times this year that the bridge has been closed and no access available to the area. DOC states their vision is to uphold nature while allowing people to enjoy the natural areas. This is an area for everyone to enjoy. However, we believe if this water level is increased to 2.5m, this access will be further limited then what it already is with the current 2.2m level threshold.

As a land owner in the area, we want to work alongside all stakeholders to ensure the Waituna Lagoon is able to stay at a healthy level. In the last 2 years, we have already put in infrastructure throughout the creeks and rivers flowing through our farm in order to stabilise the banks and limit sediment loss. If the level is to be increased to 2.5m, then this would mean increased pressure on these well maintained banks. In turn, more sediment run off will occur and potential increased nutrient leaching thus negatively impacting the Waituna lagoon.

There is already a lot of pressures on farmers all over New Zealand. This adds another pressure to all the farmers directly affected with their water ways running to the Waituna Lagoon. We want to do the best possible job for the land and water ways. We have made the correct steps towards limiting our effects on the waterway with the current 2.2m limit and will continue to do so. However, if the level is to be increased more financial pressure will be put on farmers to uphold the maintenance of their waterways plus the additional loss of land to slumping of the banks. This adds to the strain on farmers mental health which already is a huge challenge that we are dealing with in New Zealand.

Decision we would like council to make:

I have lived in the area for 30 years and have seen a wide range of information and debate over the Waituna Lagoon. From what I understand and the information provided that keeping the consent to 2.2m limit helps the Ruppia thrive, locals and tourist able to access this Ramsar site and the pressures on the waterway and community manageable.

Submitted by:

Winy van Rossum

Section 53

