

## Healthy Rivers Submission.....Ross Turner Kihikihi

Block 2 C1

Introduction >

I was educated at St Kentigern College, Auckland. I came on the my Fathers dairy farm as a 16yr. old, being the oldest child of five. Married to Carol for 52yrs, have four adult children & 15 Grandchildren. Served on Kihikihi Primary School PTA, Convenor of Dairy NZ Discussion Group for at least 15yrs. Traits other than Production Inspector (TOP) for Jersey NZ, CRV, and LIC. Senior Cattle Judge & Classifier. Director of Jersey NZ, NZ Dairy Group Share Holder rep. Baptist Church Elder and co-founder of the NZ-Uganda Heifer Project.

Won a Waikato Environment Award in the 90's.

PH.1

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

PH2.2

I believe after 60 yrs. farming, I have the authority to offer a submission of substance.

PH.3

My story on our family farm >

Together with my wife Carol and family we are passionate about farming, dairying in particular, and breeding Jersey cows and are good custodians of the land, with our beautiful Jersey cows bred since 1946 when my Dad started his career in dairying. Each generation is determined to leave the land better than the one before.

PH.4

From a block of land with no fences, gorse & blackberry everywhere, we have turned our property into a beautiful farm, with scores of trees and neatly trimmed hedges.

PH.5

We now have a highly productive farm of 68.5 Ha, self-contained all year around. 50 Ha comprise the milking platform, and 16 Ha's for the young stock. And estimated

2.5 Ha of total area is in cow races, buildings, and effluent ponds, 800 metres of Tanker track, plus trees & hedges. We milk approx. 190 cows & carry 40 yearlings & 40 calves.

#### PH.6

For years we have used non-acidic fertilisers containing trace elements, lime, phosphate & magnesium. We take regular soil tests and apply 60 kgs per Ha of (Sustain) coated nitrogen prills, which is spread over the spring & autumn dressings. We usually apply one dressing of Sulphate of Ammonia on the warmer paddocks in August to get maximum results. Coated nitrogen, being slow released is more environment friendly.

#### PH.7

We harrow in the spring & autumn when necessary. This helps aerate the soil & improves growth. Hydraulic tine harrows are used with grass seed if any areas are pugged in the winter. No land, except for some areas that need improved drainage have been tilled for over 25 yrs., but we can still grow about 15 tonne per Ha of grass a year, and always produce over a kg. of m/s per kg of body weight, from our Jerseys. This year we should reach 80,000 kgs of m/s and 1600 m/s a Ha.

#### PH.8

We milk predominately Jerseys and some Ayrshire cows, because of their lighter body weight, and the fact that they drink about 20 Lts of water per day less than heavy breeds. Science proves they are the most fertile breed, best converters of feed to milk solids, and have the lowest carbon foot print. Lighter cows, less pugging, less sediment in the water ways, less sore feet & mastitis.

#### My Submission

#### PH.9

I have grave concerns about an Overseer as a regulatory tool. It was designed for specific modelling, and different variations of Overseer provide different results (Simon Upton) Farmers have been asked to make a 10% cut in nutrient run-off over 10yrs. What's the bench mark? To have faith in Overseer, it must have a fair result for all farmers, not up or down 25% in accuracy.

## PH.10

Why is the Regional Council & the panel so obsessed with nitrates in our rivers ahead of the far more serious E-Coli in our waters. Is it because it's the easiest element to address first? Farmers are an easy target! If one googles up nitrates you will see no one has ever died of nitrate poisoning related to Dairy farming. Quite high levels of nitrate will not kill you. According to O.E.C.D. data, the Waikato River has the 4th lowest level of nitrates then any of the main 98 rivers in the world. 2016 the level was 0.4 millilitres per litre of nitrates in the Waikato River, that is less than a can of baby food, and a lot less than kale, that the Vegans want us to eat. We have 900,000 ha of gorse in NZ, which excretes thousands of tons of nitrogen entering our water ways. Very little of that gorse is on dairy land. Koi Carp are very prevalent in Waikato water ways, and causing a build-up of nitrates. Green Peace, who regularly makes statements that are factually untrue, said that nitrogen is NZ's hidden climate killer, and dairying is to blame. Interestingly, a 2017 NZ Government report to UN Framework Convention on Climate Change dealing with sector emissions stated that energy emissions in NZ increased by 36.7%, Industrial Processors and Product Use 47.3% and Agriculture by just 16%. That was the period 1990 to 2015. Who are the worst polluters, certainly not farming?

## PH.11

Our country needs nitrogen, and also the world, how will we grow enough food, be it through grass land farming, horticulture or vegetables without it. We must all be able to use nitrogen, it is necessary for life. NZ's level of nitrogen is incredibly low by world standards. We have a nitrogen imbalance of 63 kgs per ha. The UK at 87 kgs per ha, and the Netherlands 199 kgs per ha.

## PH.12

We are told our rivers must be swimmable at all times. This is totally unobtainable during bouts of heavy rain. Sediment mainly from de-forestation eg. Lake Arapuni & the South Island, and natural erosion on river banks cause constant problems during floods. A very small percentage of people swim in rivers, and then only during summer periods, perhaps 3 to 4 months at the most. Why does the Waikato Regional Council set such ridiculous standards of water quality eg. 126 units of coliform, when the EU for example says 500 units are excellent and 1,000 units are still good for safe swimming. We need to get real !

#### PH. 13

E.coli is easily the most dangerous element in water to humans. Semi treated human sewerage in our water ways is happening all the time, especially in winter. Examples are: up to 50 Auckland beaches closed at various times recently and spillages at Raglan and numerous other towns who escape prosecution due to a Resource Consents. The Waikato River water quality at Tuakau after flowing through many kilometres of farm land is three times better than Hamiltons Wellington Beach and 4750 times safer than Cox's Creek which flows into the Manakau Harbour.

#### PH.14

Riparian fencing stops some nitrate & phosphate leaching, but it surely creates ideal breeding grounds for ducks & Pukekos. An explosion of these birds will cause E.coli intensity in the water from their droppings and after about 10 yrs. plenty of gorse & blackberry. You won't be able to spray it! The poisonous sprays will enter the water, as anyone thought of that!

#### PH.15

Council knows where the 'hot-spots' are on the Waikato & Punui Rivers. Surely the sensible and least costly & fastest approach is to hit the 'hot-spots' first. Our urban towns, with their sewerage and storm water problems, soil erosion from Timber Mills left overs, diesel & oil slick from roading and a few troublesome farmers. Beware, not to stop the use of Roundup. Stopping the product will cause farmers to revert back to the plough, and the consequent soil erosion that will follow. This approach of hitting 'hot-spots' first to improve water quality, is how Ireland is tackling the issue, a country whose farming is similar to NZ, by taking a more friendly and less combative role than NZ's Regional Councils seem to want to follow.

#### Ph. 16

The final issue I want to bring forward is stocking rates. All farms are different, and my two next door neighbours are quite different to us in soil type & contour. Our farm is about one third Punui Alluvial silt loam, and two thirds Maeroa volcanic ash, rolling to quite steep. We make sure we don't winter adult stock on the hills or silt loam paddocks. I believe stocking has to be set on a farm by farm basis. Breed of cow plays a

part, stocking rate needs to be based on kgs of weight per ha. Farming & stocking history of the farm is important, and so are weather patterns for that area. Soil type and terrain are also important.

PH. 17

Please members of the panel, make all your decisions thinking of the repercussions those decisions will have on the families & communities involved.

Thankyou.