

TANK; Farmer Reference Group

Meeting 11th May Puketapu School Hall

Meeting Notes

Attendees;

Peter Kay (TANK), Ivan Knauf (TANK), Sandy Haidekker, (HBRC), Barry Lynch (HBRC), Nathan Heath (HBRC), Mark Harris (B&L), Corina Jordan (B&L), Simon Wegner (MfE) Dorothee Durpoix (MfE), Bruce MacKay (TANK), John Cheyne (TANK) John Macphee, Ben Crosse, Ben Absolom, Stephen Horgan, Andrew Russell, Paul Klee, Greg Mitchell, Alan Roberts.

Apologies; Paul Renton, Bill Glazebrook, Nick Dawson, Matthew Truebridge, Danny Angland

Introduction and welcome from Peter, as well as thanks to everyone for contributing to the discussion.

The meeting started with a brief review of the Federated Farmers AGM the previous day. There were some misgivings expressed about the tenor of the HBRC chairman's message and the way in which water quality issues were expressed. Feedback from the group indicated that farmers were concerned about sustainable land use, but that issues needed to be accurately described and the types and costs of any mitigation measures well understood.

Two key themes arose during the meeting;

The need to ensure that there was good information about what causes change to water quality and aquatic ecosystems. This needs to account for the range of activities (including urban development, flood protection work, large scale land use change over time (or at intervals) in the catchment and the timescales over which changes occur.

That farmers understand the need to carry out land use practices that are sustainable, but messages and requirements needed to be uncomplicated and easy for farmers to adopt and understand.

Sediment – understanding the problem

A brief summary of the water quality impacts was provided. While the impacts of sediment on aquatic ecosystems are not challenged, farmers nonetheless need to know the extent to which farming activities contribute to the problem within a wider context that also considers relative impacts of other large-scale activities such as flood protection (especially stopbanks) and forestry.

Action point Good summary information that explained the interconnections of sediment sources, timescales and effects of sediment will be prepared

Communication

A concern was expressed about farmer involvement so far in this TANK process and the very short timeframe now available for their involvement.

This is seen as a particular challenge. The formation of the farmer reference group is a partial solution as was the need for better communication about the process with farmers.

Action Point; As well as the reference group, further efforts to involve or inform farmers would be made through FedFarmers and B&L communication channels as well as HBRC networks.

Other ecosystem issues

The meeting was focussed on sediment, although the need to consider the management of aquatic ecosystems (and associated land use) in an integrated way would still be required.

Other relevant considerations still include how streams were managed including proper riparian land management and managing other contaminants such as phosphorus and nitrogen.

There was a concern that TANK would come back with more issues on top of this sediment concern in a way that didn't account for effects on farmers.

The TANK group has not yet addressed management of other contaminants in detail although it has indicated that a particular focus on sediment because;

Sediment in the Ngaruroro and Tutaekuri catchments are a significant stressor for aquatic (fresh and coastal) ecosystems

Management of sediment and sediment pathways will also provide for reductions in phosphorus and bacteria. There may be some reductions in nitrogen as well depending on what mitigation measures are adopted for sediment.

Depending on the final policy approach taken, a focus on working with farmers and property scale planning can ensure a more integrated approach to land management that accounts for impacts on aquatic ecosystems. An alternative regulatory approach might result in a focus on specific actions or outcomes at the expense of a wider perspective.

Tangata Whenua

Te Kaha Hawaikirangi provided a brief history of his people's connection to the land and water of the Tutaekuri. He explained that the experience of the local tangata whenua was of degradation of natural resources. He referred to their iwi management plan and their desire to improve the state of the awa.

He expressed a strong desire on behalf of local tangata whenua to work with local communities and landowners to meet their collective goals for better water quality. He advised the group about a range of programmes that the local marae are involved in, and invited their attendance at a planting day on 10th June.

The group appreciated the views and approach expressed by TK and suggested that farmers were equally concerned about sustainable resource use. The way iwi saw the long term commitment was particularly noted as was the offer of working together. The idea that the IMP provided a blueprint for further work was seen as a possible model that could be copied by farmers.

There was also a desire to share the good work already going on in the catchment – farmers felt they could already demonstrate they adopt sustainable management, but that it was an on-going concern and that it took time to reverse the decisions of previous generations.

Stock exclusion

The national focus on stock exclusion was briefly discussed. There was a particular concern that the government proposal was too coarse a response to the issues surrounding water quality and had

potentially significant impacts on farmers at a property scale that might be disproportionate to the water quality benefits. The group understood that the government is committed to this policy.

From Elsewhere

Nathan Heath provided some learnings from elsewhere including Tukituki, Mohaka and Australia.

He described the “good, bad and ugly” aspects of the various approaches. His presentation was greatly appreciated and will be invaluable in helping frame what might be a workable approach and key elements that will need to be addressed.

TANK members also thought the TANK group should get the benefit of Nathan’s presentation.

Action Point; schedule Nathan’s presentation into a future TANK meeting

Management Approaches

The meeting supported an approach that reduced regulatory impacts on farmers but enabled and supported their involvement in meeting water quality objectives. Communication was again mentioned as important.

A particular concern was anything that restricted innovation and flexibility. It was pointed out that previous regulatory direction was found to be incorrect (such as the government support for widespread land clearance) and that future policy had to avoid this by being more outcomes focussed.

There was some discussion about timing and the need for prioritising action.

A catchment or farmer group approach was tentatively supported – but the farmers requested a ‘strawman’ proposal for them to consider at a further meeting. The previous reliance on a farmer group approach for pest control through PCAs – Pest Control Areas – was referred to as a possible basis.

Beef and Lamb are committed to supporting, educating and empowering farmers. They can provide additional assistance in formulating a policy approach that accounts for the farming reality but still can meet community expectations for healthy ecosystems.

The Ministry for the Environment are keen to help develop efficient and effective policy approaches. They are supporting the council and TANK process in developing solutions that are appropriate for the local area and with the involvement of all affected or interested parties. The need for monitoring farmer progress was noted as being an important component.

Action point; Prepare a ‘strawman’ management proposal for farmer consideration.

Next meeting –early/mid Jun (tbc)

Action points		By
1	Good summary information that explained the interconnections of sediment sources, timescales and effects of sediment would be prepared	Sandy/Barry/Nathan
2	As well as the reference group, further efforts to involve or inform farmers would be made through FedFarmers and B&L communication channels as well as HBRC networks.	Mark, Drew B (HBRC) Feds?
3	Prepare a ‘strawman’ management proposal for farmer consideration.	MAB/PK/IK/B&L
4	Schedule Nathan’s presentation into a future TANK meeting	MAB/NH

