

**Submission on Proposed Plan Change 10 to the Bay of Plenty Regional Water and Land Plan**

To: The Chief Executive Officer  
Bay of Plenty Regional Council  
PO Box 364  
Whakatane 3158

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Reference: This is a submission on Proposed Plan Change 10 (Lake Rotorua Nutrient Management) to the BOP Water & Land Plan.

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We are not a trade competitor for the purposes of the submission but the variation has a direct impact on my ability to farm. If changes sought in the plan are adopted they may impact on others but we are not in direct trade competition with them.

We do wish to be heard in support of this submission.

As members of both Federated Farmers and Lake Rotorua Primary Producers Collective we acknowledge & support their submissions in their entirety.

## SUBMISSION

We welcome the opportunity to comment on the proposed Plan Change 10

The Carr family have been farming Omania, a 404 hectare drystock property for 98 years. Tony is the fourth generation and has farmed Omania in partnership with wife Joanna for the last fifteen years. The farm is located at Rotokawa and runs from Te Ngae Road up to the boundary of the Okataina Reserve.

During the last 98 years the farm has been faithfully farmed with consideration to the accepted practises of the time. Throughout the years farm management policy on Omania has always followed industry recommendations and practises. Infrastructure in the form of fences, water, troughs, yards and tracks have all been built and improved on during this time to the point today where infrastructure on the property is at a high standard. During the late 90's when production practises on sheep and beef farms was being driven through the Monitor Farm Programme, we were part of this as a monitor farm."Twelve years later, our farm management practices are very different on Omania. The business model has been changed and the use of nitrogen has reduced dramatically. We now talk in a different language, nutrient discharge, Overseer modelling and leaky soils were not part of our language fifteen years ago. To put in plainly "we didn't know what we didn't know". This statement can be attributed to each generation that has farmed the land, and also to past political decisions that have been made in this catchment, all which have had an effect on the lake.

We are very worried that Plan Change 10 is setting in stone a path that present and future farmers in this catchment will be stuck with for life. Science, innovation and technology is evolving rapidly within the agricultural industry, partly in response to understanding the effects and impacts of nutrient discharge nationally. NZ farmers are renowned for their quick uptake of new knowledge and their subsequent adaptive management on farm. In this catchment, the lake with its complex biological system and its legacy load of nutrients of N and P makes quick uptake of knowledge more urgent. Rotorua catchment farmers have demonstrated this through the sizable reduction of nutrient discharge they have collectively achieved in the last 10 years through adaptive farm management, knowledge and financial investment.

"We don't know what we don't know". To saddle a community with these rules for life is in our opinion misguided and dangerous. It would be prudent for BOPRC to review their position on PC10 given the science review that is due in 2017, the fact that the lake has reached its target TLI for three years now and latest reports indicating that the lake is in fact P limited. Does the BOPRC have 100% confidence, based on the current science available, that reducing nitrogen will likely have the desired outcome for the lake? What we do know for sure is that if PC10 in its current state is implemented, the outcome for many of the farmers will be financially dire. That will have a ripple effect through the whole catchment community. It will be a massive price to pay for an outcome that appears to not be guaranteed.

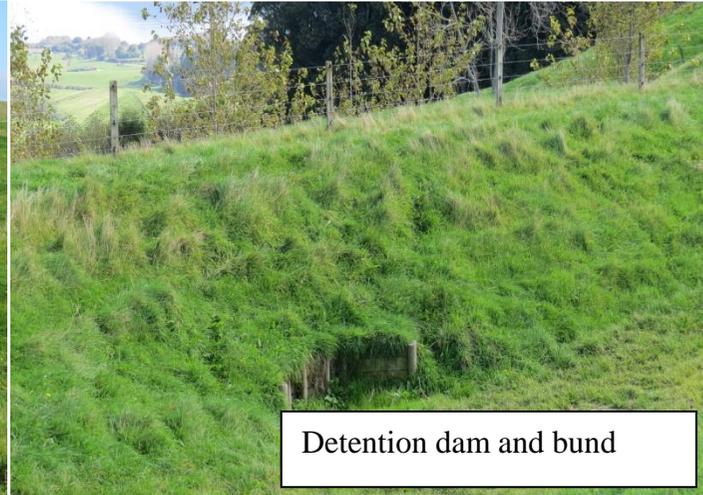
At the time of writing this submission we do not know "current state" of our nutrient discharge so it is extremely difficult to comment knowledgeably on the economic effect these rules will have on our business. We record our disappointment with the BOPRC for not allowing enough time for farmers to understand what their personal financial impact will be of PC10 prior to submissions closing.

We reckon our nitrogen discharge has reduced more than 25% from the benchmark years. This has come at a cost because obviously less grass is grown. We have however continued every year to undertake environmental works on the property that will benefit the health of the lake. This was recognised in 2011 when we won Bay of Plenty Regional Council Environmental Award in the Ballance Farm Environment Awards.

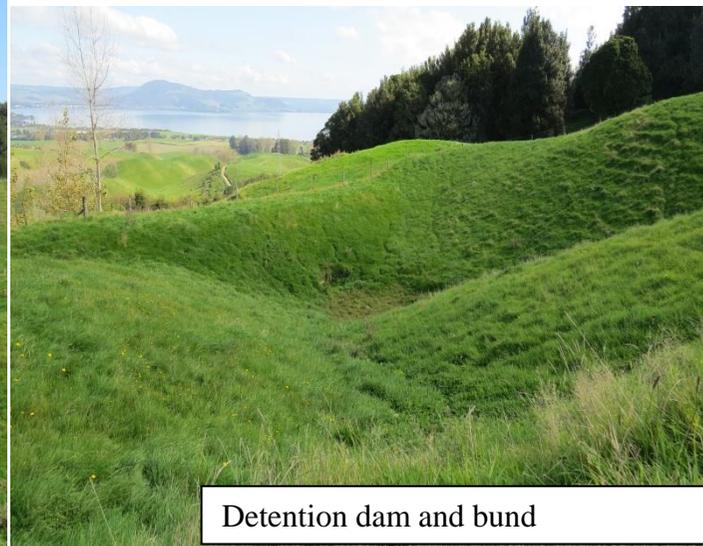
**“In recognition of your consistent and ongoing management of potential surface water flows across your farm. Your efforts are preventing further silting in Lake Rotorua”.**



Strip planting



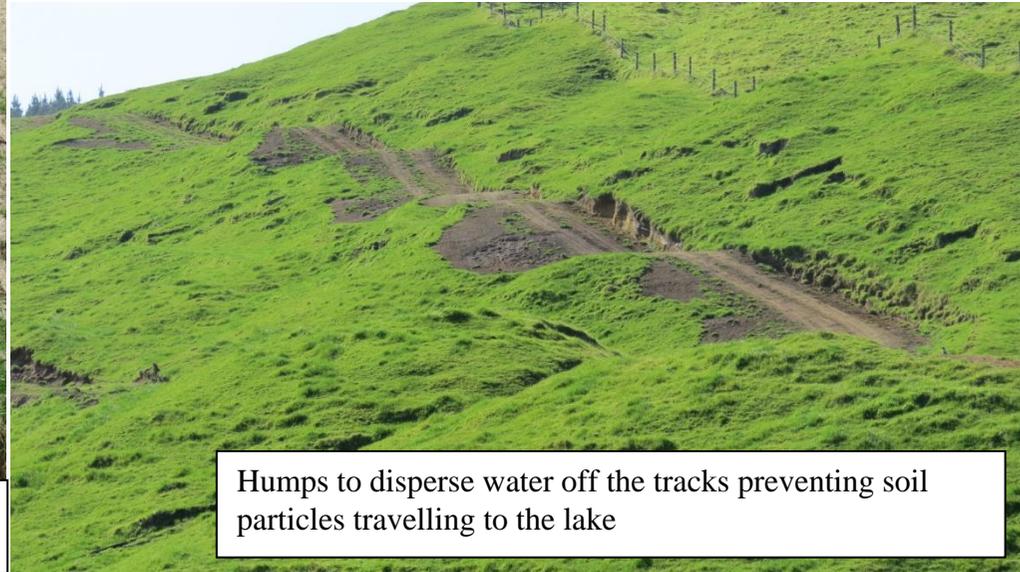
Detention dam and bund



Detention dam and bund



Culverts installed to remove water off tracks



Humps to disperse water off the tracks preventing soil particles travelling to the lake

Environment mitigation activities include, strip planting, detention bunds, flumes, culverts, dams and water humps on all the tracks. The aim is always to slow down and disperse water as much as possible to reduce P runoff. This will benefit the lake much more than the reduction of our 25% of nitrogen.

In 2013 an area of pines that were planted under the old catchment scheme were harvested. When replanting we decided to enlarge the area by 50% to take in more marginal land to prevent erosion. This area sits above a gully head erosion site which we consider was a hot spot on our property.



Agro forestry benefitting the lake



Agro forestry benefitting the city



Hillside retired and planted to prevent soil erosion

**We seek that the Council:**

- Park PC10 until the science review scheduled for 2017 is completed. This science review should include a new calculation of the sustainable load to Lake Rotorua and that the nutrients generated from all current land uses is newly calculated. Our real concern is that the target load has been 'taken as read' since its inception.
- Do not use Reference Files as a process for updating individual farms Overseer each time there is a new version released. Reference files undermine the value and virtues of Overseer as a farm decision support tool, and as a tool for tracking progress across the catchment. Farms are all individual and should not be subject to an averaging process.
- Farm Nutrient Plans must sit outside the regulatory process. We support that all farmers should engage in this process, but with their industry representative body. These plans are living documents as "we don't know what we don't know". To have them attached to Consents takes away all possible innovation that adaptive farm management allows. We also strongly object to the bureaucratic army that the Council is creating to manage this process. PC10 has become a highly prescriptive 'command and control' of farm inputs with intensive monitoring which is the opposite of what staff indicated throughout the entire consultation process. Council was adamant and farmers agreed that Council was not in the business of 'telling farmers how to farm' (BOP RDD meeting, 14 December 2015). This is not the process that we sat around that table at Stag discussing for three years and we do not accept it.
- That both nitrogen and phosphorus loading levels are considered together within an integrated framework for nutrient reduction that takes account of all the science knowledge, and a greater emphasis is placed on the total bio diversity of catchments. We support the proposal that sub-catchment groups are established, driven by community & supported by Regional Council. This recognises that each sub-catchment has its own unique set of issues that can be focused on for the benefit of the lake.
- That the principals, policies and methods of the RPS are applied in assessing the economic impacts on individuals and community of the integrated framework.
- That farming in the catchment should be maintained as a permitted activity. Land owners operate at or below their bench mark figure and plan to manage a staged nutrient loss reduction for their property. That all expectations of reductions post 2022 are part of further policy and science reviews.
- That Industry report on sector progress on a rolling 5 year average.
- That the Overseer model is the farm decision support tool in determining nutrients for both planning and compliance.
- That Council acknowledge the effect and focus on mitigating the legacy internal lake loads.
- We support the establishment of the Incentive Fund, but are concerned that the narrow terms of reference coupled with an extremely tight budget are making it difficult to deliver an enduring solution for the lake. To that end we support the proposal from Federated Farmers that discussions are initiated with the funding partners to consider widening the terms of reference to include community wide mitigation solutions that could be identified

from sub-catchment action plans. Surely so long as the lake is the benefactor long term it does not matter how the nutrients are obtained. We support the establishment of trading as a tool to allow land owners to meet the staged reduction target. Trading should not be restricted to after 2022.

- In addition to trading of long-term allowances, we would like to see provision for the leasing of nutrient allowances. This is likely to increase flexibility and market efficiency, as well as reduce the compliance burden for BOPRC by enabling short-term fluctuations to be resolved with short-term nutrient trading.

### Summary

We have a history of working with BOPRC on environmental practises on our farm. We place importance not only on the health of our soil and farm environment but that of the lake too. Input and advice from field staff has always been valued. We have had a collaborative relationship with BOPRC both when engaging with staff, and making our farm and time available when BOPRC has requested access to it for training purposes. We were involved in the Stag process for three years representing the farmers' view which again was framed as a collaborative process.

We do not consider that Plan Change 10 reflects the spirit which we have thus far shared with BOPRC. The very good results experienced to date by working with Council field staff will be jeopardised if Plan Change 10 goes ahead. The consequence will be most felt by the field staff, as they have to continue to engage with the farming community to do their job, which is a valuable one. The Planners should have this at the forefront of their thinking.

This process all started due to the health of the lake. We collectively as a community have come a long way in the last twelve or so years in recognising this and doing our utmost to rectify it. The great majority of Rotorua catchment farmers have been at the forefront of this. As an industry we are taking responsibility for our actions and doing everything in our power to minimise nutrient losses as far as it is reasonable, practicable and affordable. We are willing and keen to continue this path without being bound and hamstrung by Rules and Consents that will compromise this farming community forever.

