Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee - Gladstone Community Meeting

Date: 28 July 2016, 6-8PM, Gladstone Sports Complex

Committee attendance: Rebecca Fox, Andy Duncan, David Holmes, Mike Birch, Ra Smith

Project Team attendance: Hayley Vujcich, Grace Leung, Murray McLea

Public: 12 members of the public were present.

Notes:

Q1: What do we need to do to make our rivers swimmable and how long should it take to get there?

- Treating the sewage as a resource rather than a problem – discharge treated water during low flows – including by farmers (depends on the quality of the treatment).
- Control better stormwater and groundwater infiltration into the wastewater system.
- Water meters in Masterton aiming to reduce use and improve wastewater inputs.
- Rain water storage on new builds (e.g. as done in Kapiti).
- Removing insinkerators to improve inputs into the wastewater system.
- Holding ponds in WWTP to control timing of discharge.
- Deficit irrigation of treated wastewater.
- Using treated wastewater in farming – needs UV treatment, different for different farming types, golf course irrigation.
- Improve Masterton WWTP discharge quality.
- Deeper holes (i.e. change river management).
- Having flexibility on on-farm mitigation practice (e.g. lined ponds and/or treatment wetlands) – linked to performance standards.
- Fencing/excluding stock
    - Start in easy
    - Recognise some areas are too hard based on terrain
    - Shade and water troughs away from the river
    - Different fencing in flood prone areas
    - Incentives for beef farmers

Q2: How should different ~~farming~~ activities be expected to manage nutrients? Should they all be leaching equal amounts of nutrients per land area, or should some farming systems be allowed to leach more nutrients than others? (Note: It was agreed at the meeting that the word farming was removed from the question)

- Grand parenting vs something different.
- Is the land appropriate for the activity?
- Split into land classes.
- Different activities vs intensity.
- Restricting activity vs outputs will stifle – need to focus on output innovation.
- Getting more efficient is the answer – output focused.
- Effects based limits setting.
    - Time of the year affects soil condition.
    - Plants being used are important.

    - Is the land fit for purpose?
    - All activities should be treated equally.
    - There are other contaminants that need to be considered (detergent, viruses)
- Why should urban centres be allowed to discharge to water when farms can't?
- Fonterra won't accept milk from human waste discharged to land.

Q6: What's the fairest way of restricting water use during the summer?

- Farm scale storage to deal with reliability
    - Very costly approximately $0.5 million for dam providing one month supply.
    - Opportunities for 'patterns' of consenting
    - Make design and consenting of large dams easier.
    - More grades within dam legislation to recognise not just large/not large.
- Catchment-scale damming for use in low flows.
- Consents written to ensure flexibility around efficient use e.g. don't restrict irrigation at night as this is more efficient than during the day.

Q8: In what ways could people be using water more efficiently?

- Education - can take 10-20 years.
- Incentives
- Meter lifestyle blocks.
- Handy facts around small savings (e.g. water through leaks).
- Don't make it too complicated.
- Good practice to watch what you use at all scales.
- Vary water distribution according to needs.
- Timing of irrigation is important.
- Flexibility in consents.
- Technology for efficient use/farm management system.
- Push cost of water up and provide financial incentives.
- Still treating water like it's an infinite resource.
- Education – improve knowledge.
- Urban – pay when amount allocated is exceeded.
- Charging for water would be opening a can of worms.
- Charge for water that is managed in any way.
- Change the way people think about water.
- Need carrot instead of the stick.
- Incentivise use of water takes.
- Example – wash hands in the cistern.
- Comparing water uses would be helpful.
- Is consented water being used? (Allocation often not used).

Q12: How should we manage rivers to improve natural character while safe guarding community assets, income and households?

- Will vary according to what natural character is.

- Planning restrictions – don't let people build in flood prone areas.
- Need to be careful when doing flood protection works so that effects on natural character are reduced.
- Need to get a better balance between flood protection works and maintaining natural character – flattening the peak.
- Use water for flood peaks – don't just get rid of it.
- Could be just moving the problem.
- Incentivise development of wetlands.
- Retention dams are beneficial.
- Incentivise long grass buffers.
- Trend is to move away from straight line rivers.
- Take bulldozers out of the rivers.
- There is not much wrong with the character of the rivers.
- Dry river gravel extraction.
- There is plenty of gravel in the rivers that is building up.
- Need to look at rivers from top to bottom, don't just move the issue further down.
- Bigger water races – could use for aquifer recharge.
- Irrigation can benefit nitrogen distribution.

Q13: What are the opportunities to manage our rivers and lake differently to improve their natural character? Managing rivers could include controlling flow, channel management and gravel extraction.

- Wider consideration of 'river management' (Wider than only flood management).
- Regional Council expertise and broader consideration needed.
- Reconsider the level of risk/protection flood protection occurs to? E.g. is 1 in 100 year too high and too costly?