

**Taipa WWTP evidence summary**  
**Timothy Hegarty – Planning**

**Introduction**

My evidence covers:

- The existing environment;
- The effects of the activity;
- The relevant statutory tests, documents and submissions; and
- Conditions.

**Existing Environment**

The East Coast Bays Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is located in a rural area south of Taipa village, Doubtless Bay. The WWTP is split between a site featuring treatment ponds and screening, and a wetland system and farm drain discharge point.

The treatment ponds are approximately 630m from the nearest dwelling, with the adjoining sites used for pastoral farming and horticulture. The wetlands are located within a pastoral farm and discharge to a farm drain via a pipe. This drain also takes runoff from the surrounding farmland, before it discharges to the Parapara Stream approximately 900m away. Ultimately, the treated effluent from the WWTP enters the Awapoko River and then the coastal environment.

A number of contaminant sources are present within the receiving catchment, including livestock, fertilizer runoff, on-site wastewater systems, plantation forestry and roads. Also these other contaminant sources form part of the existing environment as per *Hawthorn Estate Limited* NZRMA 424.

**The effects of activity**

The section 42A report has identified five actual and potential types of effects from the WWTP:

- a. Effects on the relationship of Maori and their culture with the receiving waters and ancestral land;
- b. Effects on aquatic ecosystems;
- c. Effects on human health associated with contact recreation and food gathering;
- d. Effects on amenity values; and
- e. Positive effects.

I have discussed each of these in-detail in my evidence. wish to consider the positive effects of the application. As noted in the section 42A report, the WWTP was established by the Mangonui County Council following a lengthy planning process between the late 1950s and 1980s. The WWTP was originally identified as being necessary by the local council due to public health risks arising from the poor performance of on-site disposal systems. note that the WWTP treated discharges will allow for the continuation of this public health protection for communities within this area of Doubtless Bay and this will be augmented by the production of a quantitative microbiological risk assessment

required by the recommended conditions. The risk assessment will also assist in determining what, if any, effects the WWTP has on human health.

However, I also am aware and acknowledge that the disposal of wastewater directly to water can be culturally offensive to Maori, given the importance of the mauri of water and the role it has in purification and food resources. However, I note that this cultural belief must be taken in the context of other water pollution sources occurring within the Awapoko River Catchment, including those associated with on-site disposal systems and pastoral farming. I further understand that FNDC is willing to engage with iwi to discuss their concerns and possible solutions, but in the interim it is a duty to continue providing affordable wastewater services to the wider community. In order to progress culturally acceptable disposal of wastewater in a manner which is affordable to the community, I have recommended the establishment of a Community Liaison Group as a mechanism to foster discussions between the Far North District Council and iwi. Wildlands have detailed the current ecological values of the receiving environment and it is recognised that improvements to the WWTP's removal of ammonia is required. Dr MacDonald has also confirmed that ammonia reductions are possible, assisting in improving the water quality values of the receiving environment.

Overall, I consider that the WWTP has no more than minor effects on the environment.

### **Relevant statutory tests and documents**

I have assessed the application under sections 104, 105 and 107, as well as the following statutory planning documents:

- National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2014;
- The Northland Regional Policy Statement;
- The Northland Regional Water and Soil Plan;
- Northland Regional Air Quality; and
- The Proposed Northland Regional Plan.

I consider that the application is consistent with these sections of the Resource Management Act (RMA) and statutory planning documents. In particular, I note the importance of the WWTP to the protection of public health and providing an affordable infrastructure service to the local community.

The affordability of infrastructure provision is reinforced by both the RMA's definition of Best Practicable Option and the Proposed Northland Regional Plan's objectives which require recognition of the benefits of regionally significant infrastructure and other plans/strategies (e.g. the Long-Term Plan). Mr Somers' evidence has also detailed the limited ability for the community to afford further infrastructure investment and I granting of the applications will provide the time needed for the Council to undertake the necessary technical investigation and financial planning for a longer-term solution for the community's wastewater treatment needs. This approach is also consistent with previous case law, namely *Paokahu Trust V Gisborne District Council A162/2003* [2003] NZEnvC 354.

I have also recommended the inclusion of conditions requiring the preparation and use of an Odour Management Plan given the air quality objectives of the Proposed Regional Plan.

### **Conditions**

In addition to the suggested amendments by Dr MacDonald, I have recommended the inclusion of conditions for a Community Liaison Group, an Odour Management Plan and groundwater monitoring.