

**BEFORE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED  
BY THE WAIKATO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of the First Schedule to the Act

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of Waikato Regional Plan Change 1- Waikato and  
Waipā River Catchments and Variation 1 to Plan  
Change 1

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of submissions under clause 6 First Schedule

**BY** **MARTIN COUP**  
**Submitter**

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**HEARING STATEMENT OF MARTIN ROSS AMESBURY COUP**  
**21 May 2019**

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## INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Martin Coup, my family and I run an 800-hectare Dry stock property, at 80 Parakoko Road, Aria.
2. I provided a hearing statement for hearing stream 1 from my submission. In my HS1 statement, dated 10 March 2019, I set out my relevant experience, farming background, and agricultural affiliations. I confirm those details remain current.
3. The farm (Pukeho Partnership) has 116 hectares under native bush, plantation forestry, and riparian plantings. 200 hectares is in class 7, 330 hectares class 6, 70 hectares class 4, and 84 hectares class 3 land. I have been farming for the past 29 years.
4. My affiliations with agricultural industry leadership include:
  - a. Mid Northern Farmer Council 6 Years (Beef+lamb);
  - b. National chair Farmer Council 4 years;
  - c. Farmers for positive change 3 Years;
  - d. Director Beef+Lamb NZ 1 Year (Current);
  - e. Director New Zealand Meat Board 1 Year (Current);
  - f. King Country River Care (Current)
5. Last year I was elected onto the board of Beef and Lamb New Zealand and the New Zealand Meat Board. I stood for the position on the beef and lamb board because I wanted to represent the farmers of this region to get a fair and equitable deal in whatever challenge that might come their way so that they are still able to run profitable businesses and their communities may thrive. I have a passion for farming and want to ensure that our farmers have the best information available to help them make the best decisions for their future and the future of their land.
6. I have become a strong advocate for farmers being responsible for their own contaminants. I believe we all need to play our part in righting some of the poor environmental practices of the past. I have started on this journey on my own property, matching my farming systems and livestock policies to the farms land use capability classes, and fenced off the majority of my major streams on my flat and rolling country

where stocking rates can be higher. I have installed troughs in all my paddocks bar one.

7. Over the past 29 years I have substantially changed the way I farm. I have lifted my lambing percentage from 100% to this year 162%. We have dropped our sheep numbers back by about 20% to cope with the extra lambs we are now producing. as well as that we have about half the number of cows we did 20 years ago and replaced them with fast growing bulls. To make these changes in the way I farm we have needed to be flexible to change with changing markets changing climates, changing labour availability and changing environmental requirements.
8. I want to address two main issues today which I see has being the main hurdles for our farmers. The proposed Nitrogen Reference Point and stock exclusion.

#### **NITROGEN REFERNCE POINT**

9. I am strongly opposed to Nitrogen being managed by a Nitrogen reference point this proposed rule being part of Plan Change One. Grandparenting is the absolute reverse of sustainable management and rewards those high emitters and those that have not ever considered the environment in their farming systems. It will impact land values within communities just because of past farming practices and will create winners and losers. I know of informed farmers that have been gaming the system and made sure that during the 14/15 - 15/16 years they had an artificially high Nitrogen Reference Points. This is just not fair on all those that are trying to do the right thing. There will be farmers that will look outside the catchment to spread their farming operations over and thus just transfer the problem somewhere else.
10. As I said earlier in my statement, I have substantially changed my farming system over the years to better suit my land class and improve production at the same time. We have stopped cropping so are getting less sediment run off and ceased making hay and silage to cut down our carbon dioxide emissions which is the next thing that we are going to have to start thinking about.
11. We are using Reactive rock phosphate to help mitigate phosphorus runoff. I have tried hard to do the best I can within the constraints of my farm system to be a better farmer both productively and environmentally.

12. Consequently, I have a relatively low Nitrogen output but because of my typography we are challenged by erosion issues and subsequently sediment losses are our primary environmental vulnerability that we need to keep working on. As such our environmental work now focuses on identifying and managing our overland flow pathways, which not only picks up sediment losses, but also is effective for managing potential losses of Phosphorus and pathogens as well.. I should not be constrained on Nitrogen when I am so low already and when sediment losses are the primary freshwater health issue for our catchment, and as such where my resources should be focussed.
13. I have very little ability to lower my Nitrogen any further and if I was required to, it would only impact my bottom line and thus make it more difficult to deal with the main issue being sediment. This I see as one of the main issues of the grandparenting system. Those that already have a low Nitrogen Reference Point (NRP) through design or lower production systems have firstly to maintain low nitrogen emissions, and secondly may have to lower their nitrogen emissions even further, irrespective of the freshwater issue facing the catchment or the relative environmental footprint of the farm. Constraining a low nitrogen emitting farm to a NRP will mean that we will lose flexibility in a farming system that requires the ability to move with the markets and consumer demand to remain viable.
14. A case in point, the property I am farming was originally about 7 separate farms that started off as sheep farms were converted to Dairy farms and then back again to sheep and cattle farms.

## **STOCK EXCLUSON**

15. My property has a range of land classes from class 3 to class 7 and I am required to manage them all in different ways to maintain my profitability and ensure that I have as little impact on the environment as possible.
16. As previously stated, the main contaminant issues for our catchment and my farm is sediment and potentially pathogens. Though these have not been measured by me. Waikato regional council has been monitoring the main stream that I feed into by

netting fish and the trend has been positive for number and size of fish caught.



17. When I first took over this property in 1990 there were no trees planted for erosion control. I want to focus on one particular paddock that I have worked hard on to control the severe earthflow and slump erosion that was happening.

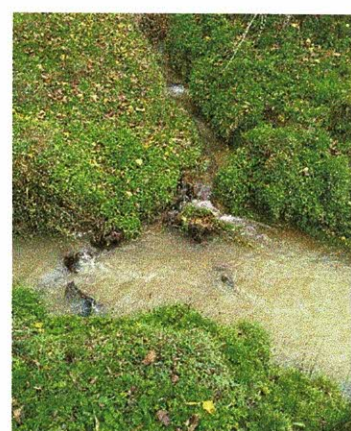
18. I have a Power Point slide I will refer (Photos)



Papa Face Paddock



Papa Face Runoff



Papa Face water entering  
Main stream 6 hours after  
36 mm rain

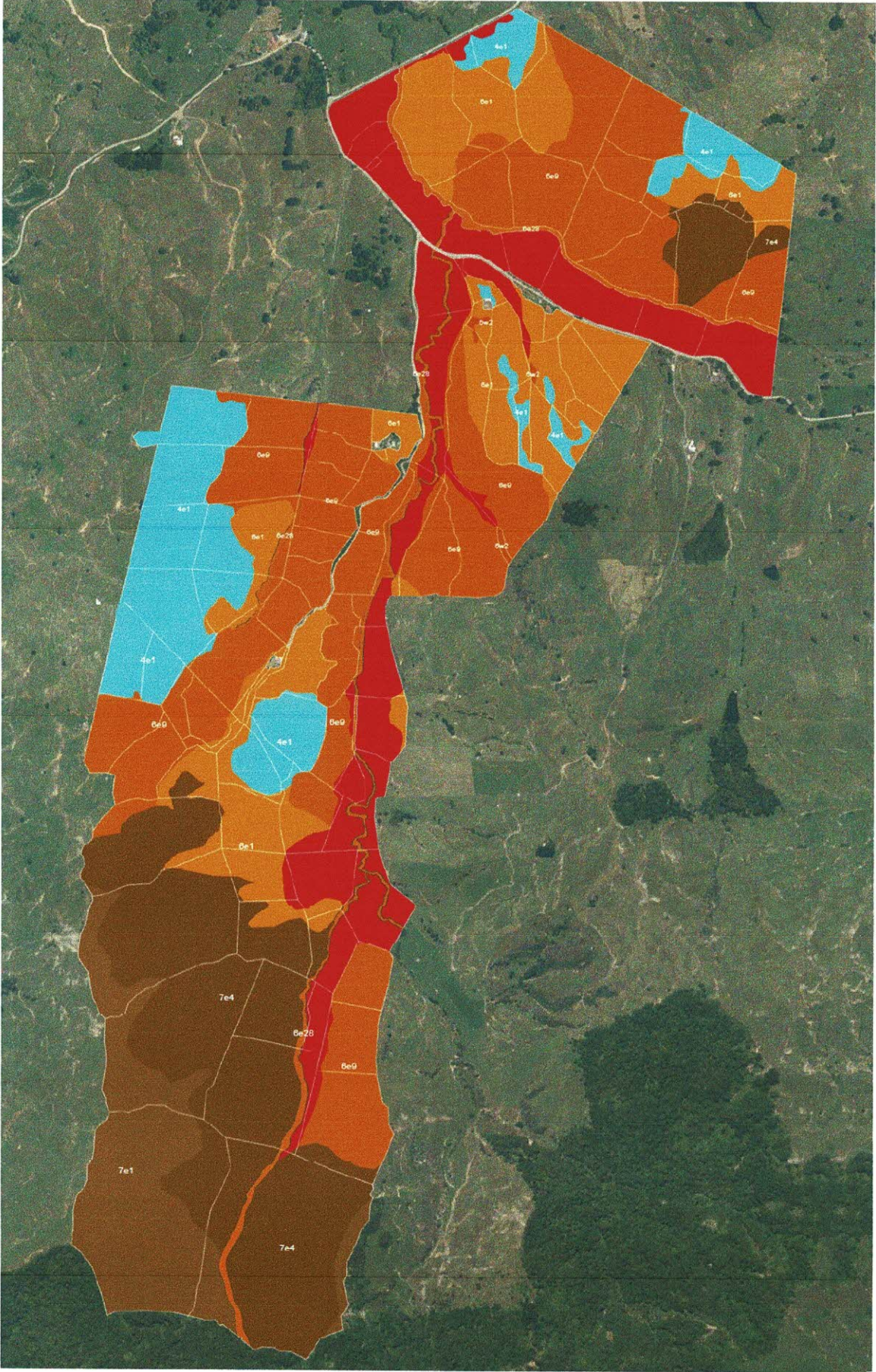
19. This paddock is north facing and is class 7e4 sitting on a papa base. Through the use of debris dams and extensive pole planting firstly along the waterways and also away from the waterways for stock shelter and the provision of reticulated water I am proud to say that I have stopped the earthflow, got the animals out of the waterways where they used to be finding water and have seen a positive marked visual difference in the sediment coming from this paddock during a storm event. One of the unintended consequences of planting all those trees is that now every summer the stream dries up because the trees are sucking so much water out of the ground. This I imagine would not be the best for water ecology.

20. This has been about a 20-year project as a number of times in the early days I planted trees at the end of winter only to have them wash away during a big storm event. Had I been required to fence the stream as well my work may have all been in vain and my bank balance will have been further in overdraft for no benefit as well. I have always said that if you give farmers a problem, they will generally find a way to solve it.
21. The critical periods when the majority of sediment is lost on my property is during winter when the soil is saturated, and rainfall sometimes comes in big events and there is a large amount of runoff and stream bank erosion. Soil damage by livestock is at its worst at this time as well, which is why I carefully manage stock type, stocking rate, and stock age classes across my farm in a way that matching the farms LUC classes (I discuss this further later in my evidence).
22. It is critical that we do not intensively graze these critical source areas with heavy cattle at high densities during the winter and I support this being managed through an environment plan, for those farms which are not currently farming to the capability of their land.
23. I have at no time excluded cattle from this paddock but used pole protectors and water troughs to make sure they were spending as little time as possible in the waterways and away from the trees.

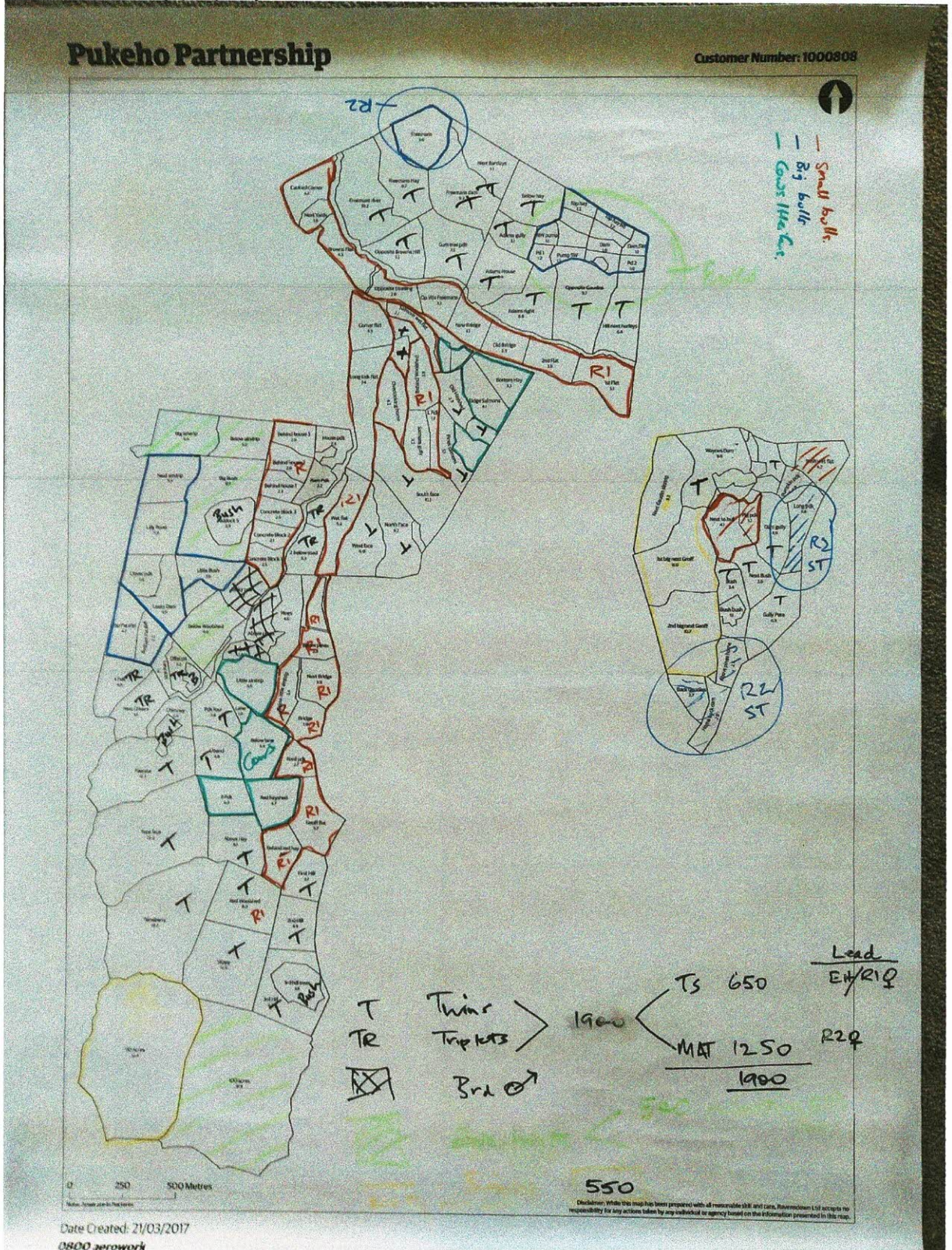
#### **LAND USE CAPABILITY & LAND ENVIRONMENT PLANS**

24. Each land class unit as defined by my Farm Environment plan is treated differently in the winter depending on the capability of the land.
25. I just want to run through how I have put into place the use of my Environment plan.
26. In 2016 Environment Waikato with the help of Groundstock Ltd put together a farm plan for me based on the land use classification system (LUC). This was a map that clearly stated for each land use classification what was the potentials and limitations I could

expect to see based on soil, geology, slope, vegetation and erosion potential.



27. I immediately put this map to use when I engaged 2 consultants from Ag First to help me put together a plan that would utilise the known potentials of the property while understanding the limitations that would lead to improved environmental outcomes for my property.





28. The upshot was that we were able to move the cattle off the erosion prone steep hills earlier than we would have normally onto ground that was less likely to be lost through having heavy cattle where they would normally winter.
29. The plan that we put together is attached.
30. We were able to determine that we did not want heavy cattle on either the flats or hill country areas that were not free draining. We allocated lighter cattle to the class 3w flats and the older heavier cattle to the class 4e land. We allocated sheep to the remainder which is the class 6-7 land.
31. LUC has been around for a number of years, it takes into account a range of characteristics including contour, soil type and wetness to help determine the limitations and opportunities for that particular land class. It is a very simple to understand and anyone should be able to understand very clearly how they could or should not use their land.
32. It is interesting to note that the Waikato Regional Council who helped organise this plan for me promoted the LUC approach.
33. We need to use integrated management and a sustainable approach for the use of our natural resources. By waving a big stick and using input controls as described in PC1 the innovative nature of the farmer will be lost. The development of a good environment plan by a professional advisor is the first step for all land users to truly understand how they can make improvements on their properties. Land users and consultants are the best people to decide how their critical source areas should be managed where they should put sediment traps and where to restore wetlands They then can decide where the most effective spend of farmers money should be.
34. Through my involvement in Beef and lamb farmer council and King Country River Care I have seen massive change in farmers attitude towards the environment over the past 3-4 years and this is backed up by some of my conversations with Regional council staff who are telling me the same story.
35. This is a huge opportunity for Regional Council and Farmers to work together for the betterment of the Waikato and Waipa river through a model of Trust and collaboration. The use of input controls will only cause angst for both Farmers and Regional Council by creating a set of rules that are not flexible enough to suit each property and leading to unintended consequences.

36. My view is that it is better to set targets and outcomes that we aspire to and get on and mitigate the contaminants that we are responsible for to get the best outcome for our streams and rivers.

37. I think that this is essentially a discussion about intensity. Be it intensity of people living in town around rivers, Dairy production on easy country with more cows than their used to be or cattle being grazed intensively on hills and next to waterways. We are or have reached our limits and we need to bring it back to what our land and environment can cope with. We owe it to our kids and grandkids.

**DATED** 21 May 2019

Martin Coup