

31/1/19. Evidence
supplied by Forest &
Bird at the recorded
hearing

BEFORE THE HEARINGS PANEL

IN THE MATTER

of Plan Change 1 of the West Coast Land and Water Plan

BETWEEN

WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

Respondent

AND

ROYAL FOREST AND BIRD PROTECTION SOCIETY OF NEW
ZEALAND INCORPORATED

Submitter

EVIDENCE OF NICKY SNOYINK ON BEHALF OF ROYAL FOREST AND BIRD PROTECTION

SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED

31 January 2019

INTRODUCTION

1. My full name is Nicola Lee Snoyink.
2. I am the Forest & Bird Canterbury/Westland Regional Advocacy Manager.
3. I have read the Schedule 2 Wetland Boundary Review report by Ms. Charlotte Phelps.
4. I have read the evidence in response to Ms. Phelps report, of Dr. Jane Marshall for the Director General of Conservation.
5. Forest & Bird is New Zealand's largest non-governmental conservation organisation with 70,000 members and supporters. Forest & Bird originally set out to protect New Zealand's unique flora and fauna. In more recent years Forest & Bird's role has extended to protecting and maintaining the environment surrounding the native flora and fauna. Establishing wild life reserves, initiating protection campaigns and promoting general public awareness for New Zealand's nature remains core to Forest & Bird's founding principle.
6. Forest & Bird has a long-term interest in any potential activities on the West Coast. We have an interest in land on the Coast and our West Coast Branch members are active in conservation projects on the West Coast including trapping pests on Public Conservation Land near Reefton (Rainy Creek).
7. The protection of wetlands is a national priority.¹ Nationally, over 90% of naturally occurring wetlands have been lost. Compromising the remaining 10% does not align with the national priority.²
8. Preserving remaining wetlands is critically important for flood protection, improving water quality, climate change adaptation and flood mitigation, and for resilience to drought. Wetlands are hotspots for indigenous biodiversity, and provide habitat for indigenous invertebrates, plants, fish and bird species. Many of which in New Zealand and especially on the West Coast, are found nowhere else on the planet.
9. The recently released Report of the Biodiversity Collaborative Group for the Draft National Policy Statement for indigenous biodiversity states that their intention is to avoid any further loss and degradation of wetlands with ecological integrity, an objective also expressed by the Land and Water Forum in 2018.³
10. The West Coast is rich in biodiversity, and in particular wetlands. Some are on Public Conservation Land (PCL) which makes up 84% of the West Coast region. For the remaining 16% however as tempting as it may be to take a pragmatic view of wetlands on private land, it is still the council's responsibility under the RMA to preserve wetlands from inappropriate

¹ Ministry for the Environment & Department of Conservation. Protecting our Places (p 2) Accessed 30 January 2019 at <https://www.doc.govt.nz/contentassets/13f28b4f23de4a2f9659390da194f902/protecting-our-places-brochure.pdf>

² Department of Conservation. Loss, value and protection of wetlands. Accessed 30 January 2019 at <https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/stories/2013-and-earlier/loss-value-and-protection/>

³ The Biodiversity Collaborative Group Report (2018) Accessed 30 January 2019 at <https://www.biodiversitynz.org/>

development and to protect areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna.

PROPOSED CHANGE 1

11. Forest & Bird originally submitted on Proposed Plan Change 1 to the West Coast Regional Land and Water Plan in September 2016.
12. Forest & Bird generally supported Plan Change 1 but raised concerns with respect to permitted activities and native vegetation disturbance, the inclusion of hydrological buffer zones, and the identification of significant wetlands using ecological criteria.
13. The Regional Council carried out a further field assessment of 14 wetlands in late 2018. It is these 14 wetlands that are the subject of the balance of this evidence. The determination of these boundaries is an expert assessment. Some submitters have raised other issues that should be considered as part of the assessment, such as economic matters. These are not relevant.
14. As a general comment, there is a lack of qualitative detail for some of the assessed wetlands in the section 42A Report including the lack of the range of indigenous plant and animal species found in the wetlands and the weaknesses in the method used to determine the hydrology of the areas concerned.
15. Despite the lack of qualitative data, there is agreement between the experts about many of these wetlands.
16. Fourteen wetlands were subject to a Schedule 2 boundary review which was carried out by council's ecologist during 2018. The experts agree to boundary changes to six of the fourteen wetlands. I will not comment on these.
17. However there appears to be a difference of opinion between Dr. Marshall and the Councils expert for the remaining eight wetlands. Dr. Marshall partially agrees with the assessments of two wetlands being Mahers Swam and Lake Kini but found that the lack of *"convincing, ample or consistent evidence hampered her ability to agree with the assessors conclusions of the remaining six"*.
18. I will comment briefly on the eight wetlands where the experts do not agree on the boundary changes.

Disputed wetlands

19. **KAGP008 Lake Kini** Both the council's expert and Dr. Marshall agree that the developed pasture at the eastern end of the southern designation (KAGP008b) is not wetland therefore recommend that the wetland designation be removed from the developed pasture. There appears to be a difference of opinion between the experts about the remaining designations at Lake Kini (northern part of KAGP008b and KAGP008a). Dr. Marshall says that the hydrological evidence is contradictory and that the evidence provided by the council's expert is not convincing that the areas assessed are not wetland. The council's expert also recognises the limitations of her assessment of the northern designation (KAGP008a) as only a small portion was assessed. Forest & Bird's view is that the pasture can be removed but the other areas should remain until proper evaluation is undertaken.

20. **PUNP001 Barrytown Flats, Mahers Swamp** The council's expert suggests removing the entire designation from this site. Dr. Marshall states that the hydrology evidence provided for this site is again contradictory and the vegetation evidence provided is limited for interpretive purposes. She does not agree with the council's expert that the entire designation should be removed however she does agree that the developed paddocks are not wetlands. Forest & Bird would agree to the removal of the developed paddocks and to a boundary change for this, once a more robust evaluation has been undertaken.
21. **BULP050 Oweka** The council's expert recommends removing the entire designation from this site despite identifying wetland species such as kahikatea and flax and providing photos which showing a number of other wetland species. Dr. Marshall states that there is no quantitative vegetation data provided nor any assessment of native fauna therefore disagrees with the assessor's recommendation. Forest & Bird's position is that until a proper survey is done the boundary of this wetland should remain.
22. **HOCPO04 Candlelight Pakihi** The council's expert recommends removing the entire designation from this site. Dr. Marshall again says the evidence of the council's expert is limited and she does not agree that the designation should be removed. Again until a proper survey is undertaken, Forest & Bird's position is that this boundary should remain as is.
23. **HOKP099 Little Houhou** The council's expert recommends removing a small part of the designation because she did not consider them characteristic of a wetland despite identifying wetland species and permanent standing water at the rear of the site. Dr. Marshall disagrees with the council expert's conclusion. Forest & Bird are again of the view that until a more robust survey is carried out, the existing wetland designation should still apply.
24. **HOKP119 Lake Mudgie** Dr. Marshall states that the lack of evidence provided by the council council's expert is not convincing and suggests that the aerial photograph shows no differentiation between the area to be removed and the wetland itself. Forest & Bird's view is that this wetland's boundary should remain as previously identified.
25. **HOKP086 Ross** The council's expert suggests removing the entire designation from this site yet describes kahikatea, flax, cabbage trees and vegetation too thick to penetrate. Dr. Marshall states the assessment provided by the council's expert provides no conclusive evidence that that site is not a wetland. Again Forest & Bird's view is that a more conclusive survey needs to be carried out.
26. **HARP021 Lake Ianthe** Dr. Marshall states that the hydrological evidence provided for this site is contradictory. The council's expert identifies no permanent pooling yet surface water up to five centimeters deep and furthermore all photos show standing water and a number of indigenous wetland species. This wetland is identified as a good representative of the Hari Hari ecological district, there for Forest & Bird's position is that until a more robust evaluation is carried out, the boundary as originally defined should remain.

Conclusion

27. The protection of naturally occurring wetlands is a national priority. It is council's responsibility as a matter of national importance to recognise and provide for preservation of the natural character of wetlands. It is also a matter of national importance to recognise and

provide for the protection of areas of significant indigenous vegetation and significant habitats of indigenous fauna. Robust surveying is therefore critical.

28. For the Lake Kini and Barrytown Mahers Swamp wetlands where the experts were in partial agreement, Forest & Bird's view is that the developed pasture can be removed from the designation but the other areas identified for removal should remain until proper evaluation is undertaken.
29. For the six wetlands where the experts do not agree, Forest & Bird's position is that until proper evaluations have occurred and the expert differences have been resolved, the wetland boundaries should remain as originally identified.

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