**Proposed Plan Change 1 September 2019 Reconvened Hearing**

**Presentation by Alyce Melrose, West Coast Regional Council’s Planning Officer – 16 September 2019**

Introduction

The purpose of this reconvened hearing is to hear submitters speak to their submissions in response to the August 2019 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report.

My presentation covers the background to the August 2019 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report, and summarises our recommendations within this August Report.

Background to the August 2019 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report

The first hearing for the proposed Plan Change 1 to the Regional Land and Water Plan was held between the 18th and 20th June 2018.The Panel adjourned the hearing and requested for a wetland assessor to review the physical extent of 14 areas of 13 Schedule 2 wetlands and provide a report on their findings. This resulted in the “Schedule 2 Wetland Boundary Review 2018 Report” being completed. This report provided ecological and hydrological details for each area visited, and made recommendations on whether the designated boundaries should remain or be changed for each of the areas. Following the release of this report, Staff completed the December 2018 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report which made recommendations on these areas.

On 31 January 2019 the Hearing for Plan Change 1 was reconvened. At this Hearing the Department of Conservation provided evidence that questioned the consistency, quantity and strength of evidence for eight of the Schedule 2 wetland areas covered by the Boundary Review Report. Therefore, the Hearing Panel requested for the Department of Conservation Ecologist and the Wetland Assessor to undertake expert caucusing to determine the boundaries of these eight outstanding wetland areas, these being:

* + BULP050 Oweka,
  + PUNP001 Barrytown Flats, Maher Swamp,
  + HOCP004 Candlelight Pakihi,
  + KAGP008 Lake Kini,
  + HOKP119 Lake Mudgie,
  + HARP021 Lake Ianthe
  + HOKP099 Little Houhou Creek
  + HOKP086 Ross

The expert caucusing included discussions about the areas, and site visits were undertaken to three areas where the experts felt they needed more information. The site visits included undertaking a Dominance and Prevalence test to assess the vegetation within these areas.

The Council has received this evidence, and in response, have completed the August 2019 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report, that makes the following recommendations on these eight wetland areas.

Recommendations

Based on the information contained in the caucusing notes:

For wetland HOKP086 Ross, staff recommend removing the Schedule 2 designation from the same area that was originally proposed to be removed at the May 2018 hearing, and leaving the designation over the remaining wetland area. ( as shown by red hatched lines on page 53 of the Section 32 Report: Maps Showing Changes to Scheduled Wetland Boundaries document),

Regarding wetland HOKP099 Little Houhou Creek as owned by Mr Allan Lowe, staff recommend removing the designation from the driveway. This is a smaller area than the area recommended at the January hearing. (in the December 2018 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report.)

In regards to wetland area HOKP119 Lake Mudgie as owned by Kawhaka Station Limited, the caucusing notes concluded that a smaller area than the area recommended at the January hearing did not have wetland values. Therefore Staff recommend removing the Schedule 2 wetland designation from the same area as agreed by the experts at caucusing, and leaving the designation over the remaining wetland area. (in the December 2018 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report,)

For wetland KAGP008 Lake Kini, staff recommend removing the Schedule 2 wetland designation from the three areas as agreed by the experts at the caucusing. The three areas are the same as the three areas recommended at the January hearing. (in the December 2018 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report).

Regarding wetland HARP021 Lake Ianthe as owned by Bonar Farms Limited, staff recommend removing the Schedule 2 designation from the same area recommended to be removed at the January hearing. We also recommend removing the designation from the small forest area, because both experts have agreed that these two areas do not have wetland values. (in the December 2018 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report).

The experts agreed to undertake a site visit to wetland BULP050 Oweka as owned by the O’Regan Family Trust. The results of the Dominance and Prevalence Test showed that the area does not have wetland values. Therefore staff have recommended removing the Schedule 2 wetland designation from the entire area. This recommendation is the same as the recommendation made at the January hearing (in the December 2018 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report.)

Another site visit was undertaken to wetland PUNP001 Barrytown Flats, Mahers Swamp as owned by Mr and Mrs Coates, whereby the experts concluded that the forest area is not wetland. Therefore, staff recommend removing the Schedule 2 wetland designation from this area. This recommendation is the same as the recommendation made at the January hearing (in the December 2018 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report).

Regarding wetland HOKP004 Candlelight Pakihi as owned by Mr and Mrs Bradley, the two experts undertook a site visit to the area to confirm whether the area had wetland values or not. The Dominance and Prevalence test showed that one third of the area is wetland and two thirds of the area is not wetland. It also showed that the area that is wetland is located within the two larger non-wetland areas, and so it is likely that the values of the middle wetland area will not be retained in the long term. Based on this information, staff recommend removing the Schedule 2 wetland designation from the same area as recommended at the January hearing (in the December 2018 Section 42A Staff recommending report.)

Evidence received

We have received written evidence from submitters Mr and Mrs Bradley who support the recommendation in the August 2019 Section 42A Staff Recommending Report to remove the Schedule 2 wetland designation from an area on their property. Submitters Frida Inta and the Buller Conservation Group have also submitted written evidence stating that they support the evidence provided by Dr Jane Marshall.

None of these submitters wish to speak at the hearing. However, Mr Allan Lowe, and Mr Kees Van Beek of Kawhaka Station wish to speak.

Questions from Hearing Panel

Is there any questions from the Hearing Panel?