

FARMING WITH LIMITS NORTHLAND STYLE – THE POSSIBILITIES WHEN SCIENCE AND COMMUNITY JOIN FORCES

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The Mangere River (Northland) catchment is one of five catchments prioritised for implementation of the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management by the Northland Regional Council. DairyNZ and council are working together to support a collaborative stakeholder group to determine values and derive water quality objectives in the small (82 km²), predominantly pastoral catchment.

Data from six monitoring stations within the Mangere catchment, (2007-2010) complemented by a longer-term state of the environment monitoring record at Knight's Bridge (2000-2012) have been collated and analysed for spatial, seasonal and long term trends.

The catchment has already moved from an unacceptable state into a B/C grade for human health under the National Objectives Framework. Dissolved oxygen and sediment are key constraints on ecosystem health, with degradation of seasonal oxygen minima and water clarity concerns for native biodiversity.

Regardless of additional water quality values that may be identified by the stakeholder group, maintaining or improving water quality will require on-farm action for sediment, shade and water conservation across the catchment.

Presentation of science in a way that stakeholders readily understand provides the foundation for greater community understanding and drives behaviour change on-farm to enhance water quality. Many change programs fail because it is assumed that people are ready to change. In reality everyone in a group of farmers will be operating at a different stage in the change cycle. Implementation of Sustainable Milk Plans (individualised farmer environment plan) on each of the 19 dairy farms in the catchment helps to understand the stage a person is at. Extension intervention can then be more effectively targeted to their change stage.

The SMP process is also helping demonstrate to policy makers and to the wider community the collective commitment of farmers to responsible dairying and improved water quality.

This talk will explore the role of water quality science in motivating and guiding on-farm actions for improved water quality.

Editor's Note: A manuscript has not yet been submitted for this presentation.