



EXPLORING STOCK ACCESS:

Perspectives on framing the problem and
solutions

Findings from 2016 Kellogg Rural Leadership
Project

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EIANZ
Conference
2017

Cows in lake a 'public relations disaster'

2:43 pm on 25 January 2016



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A photo of a herd of cattle in a Canterbury high country lake is a public relations disaster for the country's clean, green image, Fish & Game says.



Cows wade in Lake Taylor, next to a DoC campsite. Photo: Supplied

A holidaymaker took the photo of the livestock from a Department of Conservation (DoC) camping ground beside Lake Taylor, in north Canterbury's Lake Sumner Forest Park.

The man who took the photo told RNZ News he saw the cattle freely roaming in the water every day while he was staying at the campsite.

Cows should be kept out of water to prevent degradation of water quality and

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Murphy, S. (2016, January 25). Cows in lake a 'public relations disaster'. *Radio NZ Online News.*

To understand how the
stock access problem
and solution has been
constructed.

PURPOSE

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

To illuminate a set of values, beliefs and opinions
of a complex phenomenon

Knowledge has been created and negotiated
(Bazeley, 2013)

Points of view of individuals cannot be
separated from the broader context
(Harper, 1992; Schramm, 1971)

RESEARCH METHOD

■ Qualitative Interviews

Allows participants to speak with their own voice and in their own language (Byrne, 2012)

- Ten members of the Marlborough community across a range of spheres
- Three subject matter participants with a national perspective

■ Content & Discourse Analysis

Language can be a system of representation (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003)

- National & regional policy documents
 - National Policy Statement for Freshwater
 - Next Steps for Freshwater Consultation Document
 - Land & Water Forum Fourth Report
 - Environment Aotearoa
 - Marlborough Draft Regional Policy Statement
 - Discussion Papers on Resource Issues in Marlborough
- Submissions to the Next Steps for Freshwater Consultation Document, Resource Legislation Amendment Bill, Marlborough District Council
- Technical reports on Marlborough's natural resources
- National & regional media articles

■ Participant Observation

Opportunity to grasp historical and narrative structure (Johansen & Chandler, 1993; Tonkiss, 2012)

- Meetings with Council staff & Councillors in my role as Regional Policy Advisor with Federated Farmers

BACKGROUND

“Water quality throughout the country is going downhill and if we don’t act fast it’s going to become increasingly difficult to halt and reverse that decline”

Gary Taylor

(Environmental Defence Society, 2016).

INCREASING
PUBLIC
INTEREST

We need to have a good understanding of our freshwater resources, the threats to them and provide a management framework that enables water to contribute both to New Zealand's economic growth and environmental integrity and provides for the **values that are important** to New Zealanders (New Zealand Government).

NATIONAL
POLICY
STATEMENT
FOR
FRESHWATER

“Worst quality (is) in urban streams but (the) greater problem is in intensively farmed areas”, while the problem in urban areas is ‘comparatively small’”

(N. Smith, 2016, March 10).

NEXT STEPS
FOR
FRESHWATER
CONSULTATION

“We note there is a general underlying assumption that water quality, in all waterways is declining, and continues to do so....As the ministry will be aware, this general underlying assumption **isn't borne out** within the recently released Environment Aotearoa report....Thus in the Federation's view the problem statement isn't one of all waterway's water quality declining, **rather it is one of ensuring the current trend of stable to improving water quality within those waterways continues along with focusing efforts upon the hot spot waterways”**
(Begley, 2016, p. 2).

FEDERATED
FARMERS
SUBMISSION
TO THE NEXT
STEPS FOR
FRESHWATER
DOCUMENT

“alter the likely outcomes to the point of making them unworkable”
(Beef + Lamb New Zealand, 2016b, p. 5).

BEEF + LAMB
NZ SUBMISSION
TO THE NEXT
STEPS FOR
FRESHWATER
DOCUMENT

Will enable a Minister at their discretion to require all stock to be fenced from all rivers and wetlands, should they wish.

RESOURCE
LEGISLATION
AMMENDMENT
BILL



MARLBOROUGH





PRIMARY
PRODUCTION
CRITICAL TO
THE ECONOMY

Vineyard,
Awatere Valley,
Marlborough

Discussion Paper from 2006
5th priority for water quality was stock
crossings of dairy cows

Draft RPS:
“Avoid....the management of discharge of
animal effluent to freshwater bodies by
preventing dairy herd access and access of
other stock farmed under intensive situations
to surface water bodies”
(Marlborough District Council, 2015)

DRAFT
REGIONAL
POLICY
STATEMENT

“Bold move of the RPS to
identify and prioritise values”

FEDERATED
FARMERS
SUBMISSION
ON THE
DRAFT RPS

Farm animals in beds of rivers is a non-complying activity. Therefore, where stock need to have access or, or be moved through a waterway, a resource consent would be required. On the basis of the Radich Opinion, **every farmer** in the Marlborough region whose stock had access to waterways could be prosecuted under the current plan. Not only could they be prosecuted, if the Council was doing its job properly and monitoring and enforcing its plan as it is required to do under sections 35 & 84 of the RMA, it should be taking enforcement action against all the farmers in the district.

ON THE
RADICH
LAW
OPINION

LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem definition implicitly
embodies preconceptions and
assumptions that underpin how one
approaches the problem

(Bardwell, 1991; Feindt & Oels, 2005)

Values are varied,
complex and changing
(Gibbs, 2010)

“Saying that environmental problems are socially constructed does not mean that there is no loss of species and natural beauty, floods...caused by contaminated water and polluted air, by drought...

Instead, it means that there is not one authoritative interpretation of these events but multiple contested interpretations”

(Feindt & Oels, 2005, p.162)

Prevailing expectation that scientists will guide
policy makers to proper decisions through
science and the uncovering of 'fact'

(Weber et. al., 2011)

INTERVIEWS

New Zealand was built on primary production, and that was by and large, sheep and beef. End of story. **If it wasn't for sheep and beef, we just would be third world.** (Marlborough) was built on sheep and beef; Blenheim is a service town for those two industries. There was some minor...we had small amounts of horticulture, small amounts of fishing, and small amounts of forestry.

Steeped in
history

Historically, like the rest of New Zealand, **stock had full access to all the rivers and were swum across the rivers, driven across the rivers**, and in some cases still are. It's certainly part of hill country farming, it's **essential** to hill country farming that they have access to, certainly not the biggest rivers, but many of them.

Setting the scene

Business Representative

I think the **image of dung and feaces** and waste going straight into water is **offensive** to Maori, and to most... most of us can see the basic issue with that.

Describing
the
problem

Council staff
member

It's no surprise when you look at the water quality index in relation to the area of intensely grazed areas, there is a pretty direct correlation between pasture intense. (In) the water quality reports (for these catchments), there is a really clear relationship between the area of pasture used for farming and (what) the water quality is. And so if you pick up something like the (reports) on the most pristine waterways, the percentage of the catchment in farmland is very small. **And the worst ones, there is the most farmland.**

What the
science
tells us

Scientist

I don't think there is, I don't see problems really with regards to stock. Because of the nature of the lower part of the valley there is actually quite a deep gorge, so the stock don't get to water there in most parts anyway. But further up the stock have access to the waterway. **But it's not a high stocking rate** so they don't contribute any significant problems to the water.

Is there a problem?

Hill country farmer

There's a perception that is being milked by various interest groups that cows in streams are a problem. **It's not one cow.** It takes a lot more than one. You know it's intensive....where we have got intensive farming. The odd cow in the local stream won't be harmful.

Public image

It sort of happened in the space of peoples **memory** in the last five to ten years that they have seen changes and I guess that hasn't happened in Marlborough, but I suspect the sensitivity around stock and water in Marlborough comes from that wider view.

South Island
context

Fish & Game
Representative

As any farmer knows who has tried to keep a road let alone two fences on either side of a river.... Its just not that easy. I can give you an example, I have had a road I put in three months ago, I've had washed out twice this month. And the area that it washed out hadn't had any water over it for about 15 years. So the concept of fencing stock out of waterways is impractical and doesn't work. And then you've got to identify where the waterways are. And when you get **multi tributaries, you cannot put fences around all of them. It's just not possible.**

Fencing

Marlborough
District
Councillor

I think the whole thing could be mitigation really. If we are increasing the threats on a species or a habitat in one way, then try and find some other ways to get around it by providing alternative habitats. If it was possible to find a way of increasing bird numbers through some sort of control of predators. Once you **get rid of predators** bird numbers increase two, three or four times within a short period of time.

Other
solutions

Forest & Bird
Representative

DISCUSSION

What appeared initially were issues with stock access seemed to be concerns with **other environmental issues**

Reference to **community** and community expectations, yet unclear who made up community

Acceptance that there was difference between hill & high country farming and lowland

Intensification of agriculture raised by all participants but the farmers, many noted changing **land use** in Marlborough

Way farmers understand the issues different from understandings of others

Council staff saw issues solved through **better** communication between farm staff, an **easy** task and that farmers are **lacking** knowledge

Farmers acknowledged the **challenge** of fencing braided streams, **practicalities & cost**

Stock access has become an **incredibly emotive** issue that has enticed strong reactions.

At it's heart it is a **critical point** in the debate about **water quality in our regions**, and the **agriculture sector's contribution** to water quality.

Fundamental point in determining how we want the landscape to look.

As we forge ahead for a national regulation that could possibly determine stock access down to degree of slope and type of fence -

**Have we missed the real issues confronting us?
And real things we know bring us success?**

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop good frameworks to ensure that environmental problems are well defined - cannot underestimate the importance of the **problem definition** at the outset.

Local communities need to be **empowered**, and given the agency, to **determine their** desired water quality and environmental outcomes, as part of a regular and iterative process – values

Recognise that science has a critical role in informing the development of people's opinions, informing options for possible solutions, and in comparing relative degree or extent of an issue - **science alone will not provide the answers**

Need to think carefully about our **discourse**, how we communicate our intentions, our experiences, and our beliefs.

To sum up, this really is a
hugely important issue
because it actually will affect
the future of farming as we
know it in New Zealand.

Hill
country
farmer