



**Report# 082 - Re: Snap-shot survey of Waipa River and Waikato Region of Lake Waikere**

**By Environment River Patrol - for**

**The launch of the new clean rivers initiative – MyRiver by Gareth Morgan**

**With respect for mana te awa of Waikato Tainui Iwi and Maniapoto Iwi**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014 I attended a two day Maori Eel Symposium by *Te Wai Moari* at Tainui's Hopuhopu Marae at Ngaruawahia on the banks of the Waikato River. This was an excellent hui about the sustainability of our tuna/eels. The main out come was that tuna are under severe threat due to loss of habitat and deteriorating water quality. I am Ngapuhi from Whangarei but I know the Waikato River quite well and have enjoyed to swim, shoot, paddle and gather kai and tuna from it with my dad and my Uncle Buck Kenny (Tainui Iwi). I have an affinity with this beautiful awa and desire to paddle my waka over its full length and have paddled many parts of the awa over the years. I took my motor boat Kiorewai down to Ngaruawahia to do a patrol on the Waipa River after attending the Eel hui. Hapu and other stakeholder contacts asked if I would do a patrol on the Waipa to get some reasoning as to why it is so discoloured, polluted and sediment laden.

*Quote by professor Mike Joy – “tuna are the canaries of our rivers”*

- Waipa River - On 25.07.2014 I travelled some 18 klm up the Waipa River on Kiorewai starting from Ngaruawahia on the Waikato River. I saw several instances where cattle, both dairy and beef were unfenced on the riparian on the river and on side streams and drains. Some photos show where cattle have grazed, but were not there on the day of this patrol. Several photos show where erosion is caused by cattle on the waters edge and this adds sedimentation to the river. GPS tagged map photos show some locations
- Accumulative effects - These detrimental effects, some less, some more, and spaced apart, form “accumulative effects” ( AEs). When you add up all these AEs all over the hundreds of klm in the catchment you get much heavier increase of sedimentation than would normally be caused naturally. With the sedimentation there is a high probability that urine and excrement is in the mix as a lot of it is caused by unfenced beef cattle. Beef are not included to be fenced in the Sustainable Dairying: Water Accord 2013. Dairy effluent from inefficient

effluent ponds and dairy herds grazing in small drains and streams also add greatly to “accumulative effects”.

- Waikare Lake (3,442 hectares) and river outlet 31.05.2014 - On a drive around the lake I saw several instances where accumulative effects add up to cause major problems for the lake. Herds of dairy cows were not fenced off on the lakes edge nor to several klm of drains. This visit was to view the lake in its distress as was shown on TV3. GPS tagged photos show locations of “detrimental and accumulative effects”.
- Mangatawhiri River 29.12.2011 - On this day and other several occasions, I have driven past the Mangatawhiri River near its confluence with the Waikato River on State Highway One, cows, I suspect are dairy owned, can often be seen grazing, unfenced on the river riparian. They contribute to “accumulative effects”. GPS tagged photos show location.
- Waikato River 31.05.2014 - Beef cattle can be seen from State Highway One grazing and drinking at the river bank edges on a farm on Hakarimata Road. This is a common view when passing by this location. This adds to “accumulative effects”.
- Snap-shot Survey - This report is really just a snap-shot survey. It is a brief look at obvious cause's of detrimental effects to our waterways. There will be effects from residential discharges from up river such as Pirongia and Otorohanga. However dairy and beef farm run-off is by far the greatest cause of pollution and sedimentation to the Waipa River. The soft soils on the riparian are quite stable when not grazed and allowed to grow a variety brush on the banks. However when cattle disturb and strip the plant cover, this allows an acceleration of sediment discharge from the many hundreds of klm waterways in the catchment.
- Solutions - Regional Councils should engage river/stream patrol contractors same as parking wardens, noise control officers, fish and game wardens etc. Issue warnings, issue light fines, issue bigger fines for those that resist “good practice” fencing or allow irresponsible effluent discharges. Give our farmers a “fair go” and allow for phase in time that is practical, and compassionate to them and their incomes. Give tax relief and any other assistance that can be reasonably afforded. All farms should ultimately require a “Warrant of Fitness” with 3 yearly checks. There was a time when we gave little consideration to get some one to do our lawns some 25 years ago, now it's a major business. Riparian fencing maintenance on waterways could be managed in the same manner by contractors, particularly after flood periods. It need not be a chore for farmers, it needs a new approach to solve what is an endemic problem that blights our farming industry and threatens our exports along with our clean green image. Fencing maintenance gangs could be supplied from forestry type contractors whom are used to casual labour and outdoors work. They could take care of fence construction, planting and maintenance as a “service industry” to our farming sector.
- Summery - Dairy farms are akin to owning oil wells in Texas. Except that they are a renewable resource whereas oil is finite. If you go to your local BP today, you will pay a lot more for a litre bottle of water than a litre of diesel. The logistics between getting oil /fuel here to NZ and our milk into Supermarkets offshore says that its more profitable to be a dairy farmer than a Texas oilman Surely we need to look after our waterways with a lot

more care than we do. One day in the not to distant future we will export water by the container load rather than by a bottle. Imagine that, send water offshore straight from stream and swap it for twice amount of diesel.

The dairy industry self assess itself for fencing requirements and do not require its farmers to fence off (non accord) small streams and drains that are less than 30cm deep and 1 metre wide. These smaller waterways are the veins of the artery (our rivers). Beef farmers are not signatories of the Sustainable Dairying: Water Accord 2013. Unfenced beef cattle are a major cause of sedimentation and pollution of our waterways. In Northland we see a common situation where dairy cow herds in river and stream country are replaced with beef so as to not have to meet fencing requirements. Beef are left for much longer periods and often are not moved at all from long stretches of riparian on our waterways.

We need to quickly adopt new ways to meet our Fresh Water Management Policy aspirations. The main business taking place at present to meet FWMP by the industry is making applications for more water, increase discharges effluent and to construct irrigation dams.

This new era needs to be “balanced” with an independent method of river & stream patrol monitoring to meet the forecasted intensification and expansion of our dairy and beef cattle farming industry.

*Even from a strictly commercial point of view, we need to look after our waterways.*

At my local BP servo in Whangarei on 30.07.2014

- 1x litre BP diesel - \$1.41
- 1x litre Anchor milk @ \$3.20 is 134% dearer than diesel
- 1x litre Natural Sparkling water @ \$3.70 is 155% dearer than diesel
- A 20ft shipping container with 24,000 litres of water would at todays price be \$88,800 retail value in a bladder in NZ, but much more overseas.

Our water is a “taonga”, it is precious and our country is blessed to have such an abundance of it. We have polluted most of our rivers and streams in a very short time frame to be un-drinkable and un-swimmable. We can, and must do better to katiaki te awa.

*He waka eke noa*  
*A canoe which we are all in with no exception.*  
*We are all in this together*

Millan Ruka

**Environment River Patrol-Aotearoa**

**My hapu - Te Uriroroi, Te Parawhau, Te Mahurehure ki Whatitiri**

**Whangarei – New Zealand**