BEFORE THE COMMISSION
APPOINTED BY THE OTAGO REGIONAL COUNCIL

UNDER	the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)
IN THE MATTER	Of an application by Dunedin City Council for resource consent being processed with reference RM20.280
BY	**ŌTOKIA CREEK AND MARSH HABITAT TRUST** **Submitter**

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ANDREW HUTCHEON

DATED 6 MAY 2022

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STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ANDREW HUTCHEON

Introduction

1. My name is Andrew David Hutcheon, and I am a trustee of the Ōtokia Creek and Marsh Habitat Trust, and a member of the South Coast Neighbourhood Society.

2. From 2008 to 2022 I lived at 197 McIntosh Road, a 21-hectare block through the centre of which the Ōtokia creek meandered for almost a kilometer.

3. From 2005 to 2013 I worked for the Department of Conservation on the Grand and Otago Skink Recovery Programme and was the Programme Manager in charge of this effort to protect two critically endangered lizard species for most of that period.

4. My experience is directly relevant to the lizard management plan proposed by the applicant.

5. I hold a Postgraduate Diploma in Wildlife Management from Otago University.

Scope and Structure of Evidence

6. In my evidence I will discuss:

   (a) the high and low flow states I experienced when I owned 197 McIntosh Road and

   (b) My professional experience relating to lizard management and the issues I see with the proposed approach to wildlife management.

High and Low Flows

7. Having lived alongside the creek for almost fifteen years, I understand both its intrinsic/aesthetic value and its practical value to landholders through whose property it flows. My former property and several

surrounding properties used surface water from the Creek for stock water.

8. If the Creek were to become contaminated with landfill leachate it would no longer be useable for stock water.

9. When my DOC freshwater fish colleagues surveyed the creek through my property, the size and number of Giant Kokopu and long finned eels was notable, along with various smaller fish species. Fantails, kereru, tui, bellbirds and others are abundant. Other birdlife which make their home in the Creek and wetlands include karearea/NZ falcon, kingfishers and plentiful Australasian harriers.

10. I have regularly seen the flow in Ōtokia Creek rise several meters above its usual level, have seen an entire paddock (normally well above the creek) flooded to a depth of two meters or so, and have also seen the summer flow diminish until the creek became a series of disconnected pools in which the native fish showed obvious signs of oxygen stress.

11. This variance means that any leachate contamination is likely to concentrate at low flows. At high flows the monitoring regime is unlikely to respond faster than the 40-minute travel time of the contaminants identified in Matthew York's evidence. This means downstream communities will be affected before they have time to respond.

Lizard Management

12. The lizard management plan outlined in the application amounts to translocation of individuals from the affected footprint to nearby or more distant habitat, with some habitat enhancement if sufficient individuals are moved.

13. Since most of the species likely to be present at the site are relatively fecund, existing destination habitat is likely to be at carrying capacity. Thus, translocation will have potential benefit for the subset of current individuals in the affected area that are able to be captured, but at a population level the impact of habitat loss remains.

14. Regardless of the mitigation lizards surrounding the landfill are likely to be affected by increased numbers of mustelids and feral cats. Along with mice and other rodents, these are all opportunistic predators of native lizards.

15. The pest management plan has not yet been detailed by the applicant, but in my experience even very aggressive pest control cannot completely offset the effects of providing a more attractive environment for pest species. At Macraes Flat, the Grand and Otago Skink Recovery Programme controlled predators across an area of some two thousand hectares in order to support population recovery of the endangered species in a few hundred hectares at the core of the operation. That operation took six full time and three seasonal staff to ensure adequate pest control, and to monitor lizard numbers with enough accuracy to know it was working.

16. The NZ Falcon management plan in the application concentrates on allowing any current nesting activity to complete before ongoing disturbance drives the birds elsewhere. Species become scarce because suitable habitat is scarce; allowing mobile species to leave at their convenience does not address the reduction in what is currently suitable habitat.

17. The impacts on vulnerable populations of increased predation and loss of habitat has been underestimated by the applicant. At present the proposed management plans underplay the values present in the area and overstate the effectiveness of programmes outlined to protect them.

18. For these reasons, I and the Trust ask that the application be declined in its entirety.

Andy Hutcheon

Trustee of the Ōtokia Trust

6 May 2022