

Lindis Hearing

Good morning. My name is Ella Lawton and this is my personal submission on the Proposed Plan Change 5A to the Otago Regional Plan. Lindis: Integrated water management.

I have an academic background in ecology, law and strategic sustainable development, and am currently carrying out research into the Otago Food Economy.

Thank you for hearing me today.

- I oppose the proposed 750 litres per second summer minimum flow (Option 3), and instead recommend a summer (1 October- 30 April) minimum flow of at least 1,000 litres per second (amended Option 4), as measured at the Ardour Road flow recorder.

I will keep this short and sweet. I have just three main points:

- 1) I want to remind the Councillors and Commissioners that the minimum flow work carried out by ORC is the most important work it carries out in relation to fresh water. If there is no water, there would be no point to much of the rest of ORCs work.
 - For example, ORC have just spent a considerable amount of time crafting 6A on water quality. where the rules aim to ensure that the water is 'clear of muck and odour, safe to swim in, gather food from, and that supports healthy ecosystems'.
 - In that point, 6A assumes that there is enough water in the river initially to support a healthy ecosystem.
 - To ensure ORC is strategic in their water management, to ensure it is sustainable, there must be enough water to start with.
- 2) Currently the lower parts of the Lindis are degraded, particularly when there are critically low summer flows. A flow of 1,000 litres per second will be 'meaningful' - good water quality, cool water temperatures, and to restore the natural character and amenity. The result would be a healthy environment for both native and introduced fish species and invertebrates. So drawing again on my point 1 above, any contaminants going into the Lindis River will have even greater impact on the water quality when it is in a low-flow degraded state. By increasing the flow, the river builds resilience.
 - 3) I have spent much of the last 12 months talking to growers and farmers in the Otago region about their farming methods, which produces the food we rely on locally and as an export nation. The food system is everyone's responsibility. Collectively we have known for 30 years that those who rely on water takes from the Lindis would need to transition to alternative water sources, when permits expire in 2021.
 - We have heard from many/all of the submitters today that farming is integral to the Tarras community and we need to work together to ensure that these farmers succeed. I will take it so far to suggest that, we as a community, have failed to create a food system that supports the type of farming whereby farmers can still make a buck whilst providing for happy families and communities, without degrading the natural resources it entirely depends on.
 - Thinking big picture - New Zealand needs to reassess its food production system from both the production and consumption ends. ORC could take a lead by holding the conversations and supporting communities, to support farmers through creating stronger local food economies.
 - Farmers and farming communities are an enterprising lot. Having a high minimum flow of 1000 litres per second ensures for a healthy environment that these farms rely on. And we will have to think differently about our farming and food production systems to ensure these farms do remain viable.

I recommend option 4, of 1000 litres per second.