

**BEFORE THE SPECIAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE NGARURORO AND CLIVE RIVERS
WATER CONSERVATION ORDER
AT NAPIER**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991
(the Act)

IN THE MATTER of a Special Tribunal appointed under
s202 of the Act to consider an application
for a Water Conservation Order made by
New Zealand Fish and Game Council, the
Hawke's Bay Fish and Game Council,
Ngāti Hori ki Kohupatiki, Whitewater New
Zealand, Jet Boating New Zealand, and
the Royal Forest and Bird Protection
Society of New Zealand (the Applicants)
in relation to the Water Conservation
Order

The Special Tribunal Richard Fowler QC (Chair)
Alec Neill
Dr Roger Maaka
Dr Ngaire Phillips
John McCliskie

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF SCOTT LAWSON
FOR HORTICULTURE NEW ZEALAND**

25 January 2019



ATKINS | HOLM | MAJUREY

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INTRODUCTION

1. My name is Scott Lawson. I am very much a local person, having been born here on the Heretaunga Plains at the Hawkes Bay Fallen Soldiers Memorial Hospital.
2. My parents came from Gisborne and Manawatu to take up the opportunities that Hawkes Bay had to offer. Since the early 1960's my family have been involved in horticulture on the Heretaunga Plains. Except for time away studying and travelling I have lived my whole life on these fertile lands that provide our community with plentiful high quality produce and opportunities.
3. Our first family property was in the Twyford District where as kids we spent any spare time fishing for koura, eels and trout in the Raupare Stream and Ngaruroro River. We got to know the springs of the area and I remember rouge bores and trees being felled with springs popping up. I have many memories of floods, when stop banks were bank to bank and then breached causing a devastating flood, and also very dry summers when river flows were of a concern for all.
4. It is due to my concern for the environment, food production and wider community that I am voluntarily involved in representing horticulture on the Heretaunga Plains. My personal time spent being involved with community and industry engagement is at a huge cost to my family and business. But I believe it is so important to look after our environment and community for our grandchildren's grandchildren.
5. I am currently the Chairman of the Hawke's Bay Vegetable Growers, current board member of LandWise and have been in the past on the Bio Gro Board. I have been involved in the TANK process from the start, representing the Hawke's Bay Vegetable Growers Association.

CURRENT OPERATION

6. For the last 25 years I have lived on and farmed a family property which grows food under a biological growing system for mostly domestic market consumption. The soils we farm are free draining silt loams over the unconfirmed aquifer, highly suitable for the vegetable and blueberry crops we grow.
7. 150 years ago the Ngaruroro River flowed past our current boundary and during times of flood would have covered

much of the wider area. When our family purchased the Te Awa block of land from the Thompson family, who had owned the property from 1910, we were aware of the potential for quality food production. This was shown by the late Ken Apatu who had leased some of the land and had sunk a bore and submersible pump to grow tomatoes very successfully for Watties.

8. We have been a certified organic operation since 1994. Our berry fruit and vegetables are grown naturally without the routine use of synthetic agricultural chemicals such as fungicides, herbicides and growth regulators. This is much more than spray free, and much more than planting a seed and walking away until harvest. Considerable commitment is required to maintain this environmentally sustainable and non-polluting system and we pride ourselves on producing crops grown in an environment to maximise nutritional quality, food safety, health and environmental sustainability.
9. Growing organically is very labour intensive and we employ up to 70 seasonal staff at the height of the season, many returning from the previous seasons.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

10. As the soils we farm are naturally light in structure and lower in organic matter we have always been aware of improving soil structure by being careful with tillage and growing cover crops between our production crops to aid in the increase of organic matter and ultimately humus.
11. We practice supplementary irrigation in order to complete the growing cycle of our crops to guarantee supply to our markets from Kaitaia to Bluff. Whilst I term it supplementary irrigation I still plant to a production plan with an ability to have enough irrigation capacity to grow some of our crops from start to finish without rain. In some years we have had 90 days without rain and irrigation has been the only way we could grow this high quality food for our community.
12. We have employed irrigation consultants prior to purchasing our land 25 years ago and these days we have detailed irrigation measurements and advice on a weekly basis from Irrigation Consultants. Each crop has a series of Neutron Probes to record soil moisture at different depths in the soil profile, from this we can adjust our irrigation to minimise water use and maximise efficiency. We have also spent capital on

increasing irrigation efficiency and will continue to do so as we appreciate our water, soils and the wider environment are a finite resource and critical to the health of our community.

POSITION IN RESPECT TO THE PROPOSED ORDER

13. I oppose in its entirety the application for a Water Conservation Order on the Ngaruroro River.
14. My involvement with the Ngaruroro River is very much two fold, recreational and business. I have had an interest since my teenage years of fishing, hunting and tramping the amazing headwaters. I also enjoy jet boating the river when the flow isn't too high or low. It is always a reminder to me of where our water comes from.
15. I believe the community management of the river should be from the headwaters to the sea, not broken down into different catchments. There are many issues along the course of the river to be addressed and the best way to do this is with full community engagement.
16. I have been a member of Fish and Game and a Licence Holder for a long period of time, and I feel there has been very poor consultation for its members on a local basis. I believe that the National Body of Fish and Game and other applicants have disrupted the good progress that our community group TANK is achieving.
17. We need to get the management of our finite resources correct in regard to resilience and sustainability for our community.

Scott Lawson

25 January 2019