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erosion will now be subsidised by council under its' SLUI programme. This in effect penalises proactive farmers who met the costs themselves. They now feel they are paying to help the less proactive. It should be noted that subsidy programs, for pole and pine planting, biodiversity and riparian margins have been around for many years. Environmental grants are still available for those initiatives. Many farmers have taken advantage of these initiatives and would prefer to continue with this method, but feel they will be disadvantaged because of the resource consent issues. There is also a lot of resistance to the Council requiring financial information to base their WFP on. Farmers are businessmen with multimillion dollar investments and object to council insisting on including a financial analysis in the WFP. With all the good will in the world there is no guarantee that this personal information will not be used at a later date to benchmark or cap our production. Just look at what is happening to our Lake Taupo neighbours.

Federated Farmers has continued to stress to the council how HEL is defined, and how farmers need clear, practical and realistic definitions for HEL, vegetation clearance and soil disturbance that allows normal farm activities to continue without hindrance

or cost. Horizons has reacted to this by submitting to its own One Plan (unheard of in our previous planning experience) changing the definition of HEL by referring to "Land having: either Active Erosion (based on percentages of hill slopes with any erosion scars) or Soft and Medium Rock over 25° slope, or Hard Rock (such as limestone or greywacke) over 35° slope".

Federated Farmers also questioned the costs and benefits of Horizons' rules and methods to combat erosion etc in its challenge of Horizons' Section 32 Analysis. We don't believe the Council has adequately costed the impact on farmers, communities or the region. Rob Davison of Meat and Wool NZ Economic Service has provided information to Federated Farmers to support our submission points, including breakdown of stock numbers, earnings and benefits by District Council areas in the whole region. He has calculated a 10% drop in farm income would reduce Regional earnings by \$283 million on today's depressed prices.

"Council needs to recognise that the burden of the controls being introduced to manage accelerated erosion and biodiversity will fall on the landowners in the region.

"Indeed care needs to be taken to ensure that farming as we know it in the region

remains viable and attractive to landowners. This is a point often made by Fed Farmers to ensure that farmers' ability to farm and provide for their economic well being is recognised." John Gallen, Legal Advisor to Federated Farmers.

I hope that this and our meeting at Paparata has clarified a few of your concerns and also explained Federated Farmer's position. We have to get this right because the consequences will be with us for future generations.

I would like to urge all of you who wrote submissions to speak at the hearings because it is heartfelt experiences that will sway the hearing commissioners. If you didn't make a submission you are still welcome to attend the hearings and your support at these will also help to indicate that farmers are serious about the consequences of council rules. It is important to react now at this level because if we do not get satisfaction it will be much more difficult and expensive to take it to Environment Court level. A show of strength at Ohakune will illustrate our reservations for the One Plan and encourage Councillors to take a harder look at such a document that will affect the long term viability of farming in this region.

Julie Ireland - Federated Farmers of NZ Policy Advisor

RUAPEHU

JULY 2008

Your new President - Lyn Neeson

Alex and I have farmed at the junction of the Ohura and the Whanganui River's for 21 years. We have been members of Federated Farmers from the start, believing in the importance of strong representation for all farmers at policy level. But, like many people, we only really got involved when the issues started threatening our own piece of paradise, and we had the time and inclination to become more outspoken.

We have raised three children and I am proud of them and their success. They prove

that there is value in small rural education and rural values in general. Like many people we purchased neighbouring farms as they became available to help improve the 'economies of farming' and now we are feeling the effects of being over worked and under valued.

Lyn Neeson - Ruapehu President



A new line up for Ruapehu

Welcome to my first newsletter. I am pleased to be representing Ruapehu farmers and thank you for the opportunity. I would like to thank Richard Steele for his years of service to Ruapehu Federated Farmers. His support and successes for us as Ruapehu farmers has seen us beat such huge odds as TB in our herds, as well as numerous other, less obvious battles. His forthright, straight up manner has ensured that we are a much respected province in the higher echelons of Federated Farmers.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Lyndel Stone for her years of support as Field Officer and Secretary of our Province. She has an invaluable knowledge of farmers and their problems, and she has been an integral part of the success of the Ruapehu province.

I have a new line up of executive members and I thought I would take this opportunity to introduce ourselves.

Lyn Neeson - Ruapehu President



Richard Steele and Lyndel Stone

Jim & Audrey Walker Treasurer & Secretary

We are a team that have been at Waimiha since 1976 and farm 700 hectares in partnership with their son Doug. We have also been working together in the federation for a very long time

Both the Treasurer and Secretary jobs will be a shared affair, with Audrey keeping the records and Jim reporting to the meetings.

Vice President - Graham Wills

I recently (perhaps foolishly) attended the Ruapehu Federated Farmers AGM and was elected Vice President! While I had not intended to take on a job at this point, I am looking forward to getting my teeth into some of the many important issues and threats facing our industry.

For those of you that don't know me, I was the Meat and Fibre Chairman a few years back. Since then our family have lived in Norway for two years. We achieved our goals there, which were to live closer to my wife's family for a while and for our children

to learn the Norwegian language and culture (I didn't entirely master it!). I did learn that New Zealand is still a pretty good country and that there are a lot worse jobs around than farming (although maybe not in a season like this one!).

I think my biggest surprise on returning has been farmers' depressed state of mind. This seems to be closely correlated to lower lamb prices, set against significantly increased costs of production.

Graham Wills - Ruapehu Vice-President

Ruapehu's submission to RDC Annual Plan

Recently I spoke on Ruapehu Federated Farmers submission to the Ruapehu District Council on the proposed 2008/2009 exceptions to the Long Term Annual Plan.

Our submission called for a nil rate increase and on Wednesday 28 May 2008 we had the opportunity to speak in support of our submission. As Lyn, was away at a leadership course in Wellington and others were unavailable Jim was recruited back on the job. Our submission was made alongside

representatives from Wanganui Federated Farmers, President Brian Doughtey and Tim Mathews.

Tim quoted from Meat & Wool model farm data to show the difficulty the farming community has been in for the last couple of years. Jim was able to quote from our local Monitor Farm figures to show that the drought will cost many farms over \$100,000 in lost income. Jim also spent some time expressing our dislike of Land Value and Capital Value rating. Tim pointed out to Council that Land Value is especially inappropriate for General rating and Capital Value would be fairer for farming.

Council has obviously been trying very hard to keep any rate rise to an absolute minimum and accepted our offer of help to pin down any areas that could be further cut.

Jim Walker - Ruapehu Executive



DATES TO REMEMBER

9:00am Tuesday 15 July 2008
Ohakune - supporting farmers making submissions on 'One Plan'

4:30pm Tuesday 29 July 2008
St John's Rooms
Ruapehu Province meeting

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Ruapehu Federated Farmers of New Zealand publishes regular newsletters to keep our members informed

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For comments on this newsletter or if you wish to join Federated Farmers please contact

Meat & Fibre Chair - Kirsten Bryant

My husband Paul and I (with our three children aged 7, 5 and 3) farm two properties totalling 1500 hectares on either side of Taumarunui – one at Kirikau and one at Piriaka. Both are true hill country properties – the larger one is totally medium to steep. We are completely reliant on income from sheep and beef and that is why I am proud to be representing you as Meat and Fibre Chairman of Ruapehu.



I became active in Federated Farmers as a result of my concerns over lawmaking, costs and policies created by people who are influenced largely by urban votes, and how these laws and policies are having an ever-increasing impact on the viability of our businesses.

I believe it is vitally important for these people to be aware of the impact that their rules and policies have on the food producers of New Zealand, and more specifically in my case, the food producers of the Ruapehu Province. It is my goal to help get some logic and reason back into some of the policies we are being asked to fund!

To this end, I attended two leadership courses in Wellington recently, facilitated by Federated Farmers. I learnt, amongst other things, how the Federation works, how vitally important it is to have a national voice in Wellington and how we can effectively communicate our concerns and influence the people who are making the decisions. I will be utilizing some of the tools that these courses have given me very soon during our impending submission process with Horizons Regional Council and their One Plan.

There is plenty happening in our Province on your behalf. If you want to know more or need help on any other issue, please feel free to contact me, phone: 895 8070 or email: oneida.hills@xtra.co.nz.

Kirsten Bryant - Ruapehu Meat & Fibre Chairwoman

Meat & Fibre Vice Chair - Annie Charmicael

As my introduction to you as your Vice Chairman of your Meat and Fibre section, I am firstly and secondly (with no third) a hill country farmer with Graham, my husband of 28 years. We have two children and an unofficial adopted daughter. Daughter Nikki is a Communication Adviser at the Ministry of Social Development in Wellington. Son Ben is with New Zealand Customs, as investigator in Auckland and Michelle is on sheep and beef station in Hawke's Bay.

Farming sheep and beef on 620 hectares in Otangiwai, both Graham and I are third generation hill country farmers who, like all farmers, have an unexplainable passion and an affinity with our land, as well as it being our business. As I see it; never before in farming

history has there been a greater need for farmers to unite and become one voice and one entity to stem the erosion of our property rights to protect our farming business, our livelihoods and the future of farming.

I truly believe that our only voice is with the Federation. Ruapehu Federated Farmers is very fortunate to have very enthusiastic and passionate people willing to put their time, enthusiasm and experience on your behalf towards the greater good of future New Zealand Farming. I urge all of you out there with the same affinity to support these people.

Annie Charmicael - Ruapehu Meat & Fibre Vice-chairwoman

Regional Plan

At Federation level we are currently supporting Lake Taupo farmers who are facing restrictions on their businesses as a result of Waikato Regional Council's Lake Taupo Catchment Plan. Regional Councils through out the country are attempting to impose rules on farming. I believe it is an invasion of our property rights and an attempt to create expensive empires that we, the rate payers, have to pay for. Compliance costs have reached an unacceptable level and we are going to have to fight to push the boundaries back.

This is clearly illustrated at a localised level

with Horizon's further attempts to control farming in the Retaruke and Manganui O te Ao. In our submission to the Annual Draft Plan we opposed council involvement in this project on the grounds that it should be funded by the Department of Conservation and not rate payers, and there was no provision made for the work in the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP).

But of course the big issue is the proposed One Plan and we will be very busy over the next four weeks preparing for the submission hearings. I have tried to summarize the key issues in the following statement.

Drought update

We have all been affected with different degrees of severity with the present drought. Many of you who have rung the 0800 number regarding the drought recovery assistance programme and have been sent facts sheets which have not included King Country, Ruapehu district or Ruapehu District Council on the Territorial Local authority criteria areas list. Regrettably this is a printing error because as from 18th February all Horizons region had a drought declaration classification. Unfortunately King Country/ Ruapehu has no active Rural Support Trust at this date.

Mayor Sue Morris is working hard in conjunction with the Regional Commissioner to join forces with Taranaki. I have spoken at length with the Regional Drought Coordinator for Taranaki and King Country, Terry Curran, who is only too happy to speak to anyone confidentially who is needing

help, or even enquiries on assistance that is available. Assistance has been allocated for seed, stock feed, household food vouchers and stress relief breaks to name a few.

Even if you don't require assistance but know of others who do but are too proud to seek help, the Coordinators will come to them confidentially. You can contact Terry on 06 968-6640. Another option many are taking is the "Tax Relief for Farmers Drought 08". This is tax relief and income assistance with many tax provisions that could help. Contact IRD on 0800 473 566 or www.ird.govt.nz. Or for more information on Work and Income assistance available to drought affected farmers and farm workers call 0800 779 997. Hoping you all have a very favourable winter and spring with an abundance of grass growth.

Annie Carmichael - Ruapehu Meat & Fibre Vice-chairwomen

Meat merger meeting thought provoking

I recently attended the Meat Industry Action Group (MIAG) meeting in Te Kuiti.

I have to say that I found the meeting very thought provoking and stimulating. I went along very much as a sceptic and came home firmly in the camp of "the believers". As you are probably aware, the MIAG is pushing for a dominant farmer owned meat processing and marketing company along the lines of that proposed by Alliance earlier this year. They acknowledge that merging five companies in one hit was always unlikely to happen, and so propose to try and force a merger between Alliance and PPCS as a first step.

Why have I changed my tune and now support this idea? Basically the realization that the current industry model is never going to deliver the marketing effort we want for our products. Under the current industry structure, it is very difficult for any company to capture the benefits of time and money spent on marketing. The most efficient and risk free strategy under the current industry structure is basically low cost commodity trading.

While I don't believe those that think a dominant exporter can dictate the prices in

the market, a dominant exporter would be better positioned to resist a downward auction by the now dominant supermarket chains. More importantly though, for me, is the fact that a dominant exporter would have more incentive to bother developing both existing and new markets. In my mind, the efforts



to date by individual companies to develop their own brands are a completely wasted effort. We already have an iconic brand called 'New Zealand Lamb'. It is probably the main thing that New Zealand is known for worldwide. I have personally seen lamb and mutton legs, from several companies, all thrown in the same supermarket freezer with a sign saying "New Zealand Lamb". Why

One Plan land

Horizons has chosen to concentrate on accelerated erosion as its chief objective of land issues in the One Plan. In particular it has targeted vegetation clearance, land disturbance and Highly Erodable Land as the main contributors to erosion in the region. They cite the adverse effects as being loss of soil and fertility, track and fence damage etc to farm owners; sediment (and phosphates attached to sediment) reducing water quality in rivers; and damage to community infrastructure like roads and river protection schemes.

These issues have always been a focus in previous plans – even before Horizons was created, although slipping and sediment reducing water quality were the main issues. The previous Land and Water Plan allowed clearance of 2 ha of any vegetation per year, plus scattered kanuka or manuka regrowth and defined plant pests. Soil disturbance allowed cultivation up to 3m from a stream, or bulldozing up to 5m from a stream. No vegetation, except for production forest, could be cleared within 20m of a stream. A resource consent would have been required in all other cases, although enforcement action has only been used in a very few extreme or blatant cases.

The One Plan has tried to confine soil

disturbance and vegetation clearance rules to Highly Erodable Land (which they have struggled to define), except for within 20m of gullies, streams and lakes, unless the slope is over 15° - where a 100m setback is required. The chief change is more control on Highly Erodable Land (HEL), and greatly increased margins along waterways, which will trigger more Resource Consents in future (minimum cost \$500+).



The sweetener is Horizons Sustainable Land Use Initiative (SLUI) which involves the preparation of Whole Farm Plans (WFP) at no preparation cost to the farmer. The WFP is developed in consultation with the farmer and Council staff/consultants, and allows soil disturbance and vegetation clearance on the farm without any consent if it is covered by the WFP.

not join forces to really properly coordinate an orderly marketing and distribution of this great product.

While New Zealand is a very small player in beef, there must also be an opportunity to promote grass-fed beef as a tastier, healthier, naturally raised, low carbon footprint product. Potentially, to get the required scale and presence in the market, we may look to supply similar quality grass-fed beef from other countries under this brand (e.g. Uruguayan beef)

The possibilities are exciting. Of course, it is easy to pick holes in the idea: Look at the performance of past and current cooperatives; where should the funding come from? Why should farmers pay for plant closures, and hey, the lamb price is going to pick up next year anyway! Sometimes I think, though, you need to focus on a vision and "just do it".

The current industry model is an efficient processing and selling/ disposal model, but if we want a modern marketing driven structure for the future, then it is up to farmers to make it happen.

Graham Wills - Ruapehu Vice-president

In addition Horizons is proposing generous subsidies for retiring land from production or planting forestry etc. The farm must contribute at least 33% for expenditure that has no off-farm "benefits".

Federated Farmers regionally has given conditional support to WFP and Horizons' objective of "having 50% of farms with HEL being either sustainably managed, or having a WFP". WFPs are developed with farmer input, with individual plans to address erosion, growth, economic viability and farmer's individual personal and financial circumstances. At any point participants can opt out, i.e. they are totally voluntary. Federated Farmers supports this approach because it amounts to self-regulation – farmers are given the opportunity to reach agreed outcomes by various methods to avoid, mitigate or remedy adverse effects in ways that suit them. While this WFP will be drawn up at no cost to the farmer, it will cost every ratepayers approximately \$18 pa, rising to \$80 pa. There is no obligation on the farmer to carry out the recommendations and in this regard there is concern that if a WFP is shelved, the ratepayer has wasted their money.

Some farmers are aggrieved that previously self funded activities to mitigate accelerated

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