

Before a Hearings Panel of the Canterbury Regional Council

Under Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of applications for Regional Council Resource Consents to take and use water in the Upper Waitaki River Catchments

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF DAVID ANDERSON

1. My full name is David Anderson. I live at Bog Roy Station. The Bog Roy Station lease was taken up by John Anderson in 1919 - my great-grandfather. Lisa and I are the fourth generation farming Bog Roy, with the fifth on the way.
2. Access to Bog Roy is via State Highway 83 approximately 10 km west of the Otematata township. Bog Roy Station shares its property boundary with Lake Benmore and of all the applications in this hearing we are probably one of the closest to the actual dam.
3. My grandfather Duncan Anderson started the initiative of irrigating the beautiful silt flats of Bog Roy. In the late 1960's, when Benmore was raised, those irrigated flats (pic) were drowned, therefore losing the most productive and profitable land to the hydro power scheme for the benefit of the nation.
4. Not only were many properties affected directly by the hydro development, but the community lost favourite picnic areas, swimming holes and world class fishing spots. My mother still talks about watching where the local children learnt to swim and special places where families enjoyed, being lost forever as the lake engulfed the land. This invoked emotions not dissimilar to watching a friend drown.
5. The land received in compensation for land lost is where we are currently seeking to irrigate. Its current production still does not reach what was lost as it is a flat devoid of topsoil, covered in rocks and briar (pic).
6. The nation has benefited enormously from the hydro power schemes sprawling across the Waitaki and Mackenzie basins, with Meridian annually generating millions of dollars worth of profit from them. I am aware that we are left with many recreational lakes; however we are also left with a matrix of canals, power lines and power towers criss-crossing over the landscape, with huge visual impact. Personally, we have four major power lines stringing across our property – including the earth to the Cook Strait cable. It seems rather ironic that the irrigators are being criticised for the visual impact they cause in the greening of the landscape.

What Irrigation Means Now

7. Two years ago, in the grip of drought, store lambs selling at the annual Omarama sale yards sold for an average of \$14 per lamb. In June of the same season, personally, we slaughtered lambs for \$76/head meat value, plus they yielded \$15 of wool giving a total value of about \$90/head. Therefore, those forced to sell at this sale missed out on a possible \$74/head extra income. That is \$74,000 per 1000 lambs!
8. Irrigation for the majority of people in our area ensures against such volatility of the store market, keeping the extra income generated from finishing these young stock in our community.
9. The climate of our district is extreme – ranging from the harsh dry summers to the sub zero temperatures of the winter. In fact, soil temperatures rarely rise above 0°C for the three coldest months of winter. The accumulation of supplementary feed from our irrigated land plus the growing of winter feed crops, helps us care for our stock during months when no feed grows.
10. In short our irrigable land provides the stability to our overall farm. It is the heart of our farm. It compensates for the harsh weather conditions and allows us to farm through drought years. It has allowed us to diversify production so that we are now less dependent on wool production on our main income source and it provides overall improvement to the quality of our stock – for both meat and wool production. The irrigation area is a small percentage of the overall property – but it provides the support to ensure that the balance of our farm is protected from over-grazing and soil loss.
11. The importance of this irrigation to grow feed during the growth months not only has the direct on-farm benefits, but also has very far-reaching flow-on effects for the wider community. One example of this is a local contractor in our area – 10 years ago he started with two tractors and a silage chopper, employing two staff, who received \$40,000-\$50,000 in wages in total. Now, due to the growth in the area, this same contractor runs a total of 17 various machines, employs 16 staff who receive over half a million dollars in wages, and contributes to over 20% of the primary school's student roll.

Irrigation Impacts

12. On a personal level, current irrigation on Bog Roy that we are seeking a renewal for, covers less than 5% of the total property. It would be fair to say that the vast majority of properties in the district already irrigating or seeking to irrigate will be in similar proportions.
13. This irrigation is used, or is sought to be used, as an integral part of the property as a whole for reasons already stated, which will enable family run properties to stay both economically and environmentally sustainable, in order to pass onto the next generation such as ours has, for almost a hundred years.

The Ahuriri Arm of Lake Benmore

14. Part of this hearing that concerns me is that we are being lumped in with many other applicants with wildly varying proposals for the use of water – some much more contentious than others. The only common theme is that we are all in the Upper Waitaki Basin.
15. Our farming operation is worlds apart from the large corporate-style property development that is also being proposed for the area.
16. Put simply our overall percentage of the land we propose to irrigate is very small relative to the balance of our farm – and we are not seeking to change markedly the way we farm at Bog Roy. However whilst we have contributed to the costs of the Water Quality Study we now find that we are grouped in the Ahuriri Arm of the catchment. As far as I am concerned the Ahuriri River enters Lake Benmore approximately 20 kilometres to the west of our property. While I can accept that there are sensitive catchments in the Upper Ahuriri that need to be managed sensitively I feel we are physically separated from those catchments and we can have no influence or control on the land use patterns of those large scale farming proposals.
17. Yet at Bog Roy we are included within the Ahuriri node for assessment purposes. The idea that we may be affected by discharges that occur from corporate dairying operations by requiring all applicants to take responsibility for any deterioration of water quality at a certain node is unacceptable to us. Firstly we are very confident that we can meet all of our mitigation measures on farm –

essentially they are practical measures which we would want to undertake in any case – but we are worried that we might be asked to undertake further mitigation if the effects associated with the larger enterprises does affect water quality overall.

18. Farming in the MacKenzie is not done on a year by year basis. Weather patterns require, even with irrigation, conservative land management. Stock numbers are built up gradually and any review on an annual basis would be difficult to work in with our farming patterns which have much longer planning and implementation phases
19. I firmly believe that development on the scale suggested by the very large applications at this hearing should be treated almost totally separate from irrigation being used for purposes such as ours, which is to use irrigation as an integral part of the property to strive for future viability.