

Biggs Agriculture Ltd (Submitter No. PC7-221)

PC 7 Hearing Presentation – To be presented 23 October 2020 by Rebecca Biggs

Biggs Agriculture Ltd Farms approximately 1,800 Hectares in the Fairlie Basin, growing a majority of arable crops complimented by some specialty seed crops. We also trade Beef Cattle. The majority of our business is dryland, with the exception of 135 Hectares of Irrigated Land via shares with Opuha Water Ltd. This Farm is situated just across the South Opuha River Bridge, with tributary abstraction off the River, via the Morris Rd Scheme, which abstracts under consents held by Cascade Irrigation Race Ltd .

As per the details in our Submission made on 13 September 2020 our main concerns with PC7 are:

- **The South Opuha Environmental Flow and Allocation Regime – BA Permit from 2025(Step 1) and BA Permit from 2030 (Step 2)**

When we purchased our irrigated property, we paid a premium on the purchase to get irrigation. It is the most expensive land parcel that we own. We made this decision to enable us the certainty of being able to grow ‘more valuable’ crops, and allow diversification from our business model at the time. Whilst these ‘more valuable’ crops don’t require a lot of water to grow, they are hard to grow and require water at certain times of their life cycle. A good example is Raddish or Pak Choy, if you think of your own vegetable garden at home and you plant the seedlings and then don’t water them to get them started, they die or wilt and become unhealthy.

We have a Farm Environment Plan, developed with the assistance of Opuha Water Ltd, that has been independently audited and received an ‘A’ grade. We strive to farm to a very high standard and take pride in doing things well.

We are bringing up our family on our farm, our land is not only our home but our livelihood. It is extremely important to us that the Rivers, Lakes and Land are well cared for and continue to provide for our children and grandchildren after them. We recognise this careful balance between our environment and what we can produce to allow this to be economically sustainable, both for our family, our staff and their families and the wider community.

We are, however, mystified by the significant amendments to the South Opuha Flow regime in the Proposed PC7 and the s42A report, especially in light of the information provided through the Flow and Allocation Working Party process, by Dr Gregory Ryder. Dr Ryder shows that the South Opuha River is currently in good health. We acknowledge that by implementing the Step 1 flows, under Table 14(n) we can expect to see some ecological and quality outcomes that benefit the River. And albeit these gains come with some economic consequences to our business we **do** support this. What troubles us is that we do not see that the Step 2 of the proposed regime provides the same gains, and comes with much larger economic consequences. With Step 1 being implemented in 2025 it will take time to see if there are any gains to both the ecological health and water quality.

According to the documents we have read by Dr Ryder the second step only provides incremental gain for the River, but the economic analysis undertaken by Mr Grant Porter shows that Step 2 will have a large effect to the economics of our business.

For us the reduction in EBIT per Mr Porter's analysis (on that 135Ha portion of our Farm) would equate to a drop in EBIT of \$36,180 for Step One and a drop of \$50,760 for Step Two. For us this means less money to put back into our communities. Last year we chose to take out a bank mortgage of \$30,000 (additional to our Farm Mortgages) to carry out specific Environmental Improvements. We bought forward planned plantings and wetland fencings. We chose to get this done now to get the benefits earlier. However under the reduced the EBIT from the proposed flows we will no-longer be able to do such projects which is a real shame for the environment and the community. Step 2 would also compromise our ability to employ staff. . At present we employ one FTE on this portion of the farm, who lives on farm with his wife and 2 children who attend our local school and are heavily involved in our wider community in school, rugby and swimming. To lose such an employee would be devastating for us, him and his family, and the wider community. We also acknowledge that for us this could be much a much higher reduction in EBIT than the above calculations because of the value of the crops we grow under irrigation that boosts the EBIT over the remaining Dryland parcel of land, the risk of growing such crops is simply too great without irrigation.

- **Opihi Mainstem Flow Regime (and Operation of the Dam)**

We have been involved with our local Catchment Group for some years now. We continue to see the work of the Adaptive Management Working Group and OEFRAG as incredible vehicles for River and Lake Management. The AMWG make it possible to manage the river as 'Living' - To be able to bring all stakeholders together and make plans to adapt to different seasons, weather conditions etc in order to maximise both environmental benefits to the River and Irrigation is so valuable.

We fully support the AMWG.

I would like to invite you on farm and show you what we do first hand, but as this is unlikely to be an option, please see the attached photos below showing my family at the River and Lake and photos of our farm with the lake in the horizon. We are so ever fortunate to be farming in such an amazing environment and will strive to keep this for our family to keep farming with continuous improvement attitudes.

Thank you.

