

**BEFORE COMMISSIONERS ON BEHALF OF
ENVIRONMENT SOUTHLAND**

REF APP-20181750

UNDER the Resource Management Act 1991
IN THE MATTER of an application for resource consent
BY M & C Adams as trustees of the
MJ Adams Trust

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF MICHAEL ADAMS

28 APRIL 2019

Introduction

1. My name is Mike Adams, and myself and my wife Cindy Adams are the trustees of the M J Adams Trust. We are the applicants on behalf of the trust in relation to the proposal to use land for farming purposes (expanded dairying), to discharge effluent to land from 1150 cows, and to take groundwater for stock and shed water purposes.
2. My family has been farming in Southland since 1864 and has been on the present property since 1958. I am a born and bred Southlander and apart from one year overseas have always lived in Southland (in fact have always lived at the present location).
3. My wife Cindy is a secondary school teacher in Winton. We are very committed to the area and community we live in and are on the Board of Trustees and PTA for the local school and organise and coach for various sports including rugby, netball and squash.
4. I have been running the family farm since 1992 when I was 21. We were sheep farmers until the economics of this meant that we could not support the growth of our business or family succession by remaining in that industry.
5. We have three children, all of whom are interested in farming, which drives our desire to farm in a sustainable manner that we hope can also provide opportunities for them in the future.
6. We converted this current property in 2014 and have enjoyed the challenge of dairy farming. We are not a corporate or syndicate farm and our farm is our pride and joy and we certainly want to leave the farm in a better state for the next generation.
7. Good environmental management is very important to us. We always aim to employ best practice throughout our operations. We view this as being essential to the role we play in our community, and for our business to be economically viable. All waterways are fenced off and we have nearly completed our riparian planting programme which we committed to as part of the original conversion.
8. We employ professional consultants to guide us on farm improvement and have worked with Environment Southland to prepare a Farm Focus Plan for us. We have had no compliance issues since the conversion of the property, and Michelle Te Maro, the Environment Southland Compliance Officer, has always complemented us on the state of our farm.

Existing Operations

9. Our existing dairy platform encompasses 330 hectares of largely flat to very gently sloping land. We already have an existing resource consent which enables us to milk 1000 cows. Our original conversion was consented in 2014.

10. The existing infrastructure on our farm is built and maintained to a high standard. We utilise a 64-bail rotary dairy shed. Our effluent storage pond was built with excess capacity to provide greater management flexibility in terms of the management and application of effluent. The pond is a 90-day clay lined storage pond. At the time we constructed this pond, we made the decision to proceed with a clay pond given the very high quality of clay that was available on our property. The testing of the clay at the time indicated that a very high degree of compaction was possible. Had this not been the case we would have chosen to go with a different construction method.
11. We typically try to operate a simple farm system, which enables us to utilise all of the feed which we can grow, however based on our current farm area, we are unable to run a fully self-contained system, which has meant that we have had to graze some of our in milk cows and our young stock off farm. In a changing climate of increasing costs, we would like to be able to move towards being fully self-contained.
12. Within our existing farming operation, we currently employ six people, who are an integral part of our farming business and the Nightcaps community.

Background to Application

13. In 2017 we purchased the “Northern Block” from Mrs Roughan. This property adjoins the northern boundary of our existing dairy platform and provided what we saw as an opportunity to expand our existing operations in a manner which resulted in an overall reduction in stocking rate. We purchased approximately 122 hectares, although only the approximately 100ha which immediately adjoins the existing dairy platform is proposed to be brought into the dairy operation.
14. The remaining 22 hectares (approximately) is separated from the balance of the farm by State Highway 96, therefore making it difficult from an access perspective to incorporate into the daily farming operations. This 22-hectare block is intended to be utilised for the purpose of growing supplementary feed to support the main farming enterprise. The use of the land for growing supplementary feed remains unchanged from when it was utilised by the previous owner (Mrs Roughan).
15. Prior to our purchase of this block, the property (specifically the 100ha approx. of the Northern Block adjoining our existing dairy platform) was used for intensive winter grazing for at least the previous five years. During this period Mrs Roughan wintered some of our cows, which was convenient for us being located across the road from our existing platform. In addition to the cows she grazed for us, she also grazed cows for other clients. We had no involvement with these operations and are unsure who the other farmers grazing their cows on this property were.
16. Immediately prior to our purchase of this block, almost all of the property was being utilised for winter grazing. We felt that this practice was not environmentally sustainable in the long term because of the soil degradation

and potential impact on the Waicola Stream that runs through the block. Our view was through our purchase of the property we could cease the intensification of this activity in lieu of an expanded, yet lower intensity dairy operation. We also felt that this would be beneficial for our overall operations given that the Northern Block is immediately upstream of our existing dairy platform.

17. In addition to the purchase of the Northern Block, we also had the opportunity to purchase approximately 60 hectares, known as the Eastern Block. At the time of purchase, this block was being run as a sheep breeding and finishing unit, and the purchase of this block provided us with the opportunity to move towards becoming a fully self-contained farming enterprise.
18. Since our purchase of both blocks, we have undertaken significant work to ensure both blocks have all waterways fenced and have substantial riparian planting established.

Summary of Consent Proposal (Proposed Operations)

19. As a result of the opportunity to add the additional land (Northern and Eastern Block), we decided to also work through adding an additional 150 cows to our existing consented operation. This would see our total peak milk cow numbers increase from 1000 to 1150 over an area of 490 hectares. In our opinion we considered this to be a positive effect as this proposal would reduce our stocking rate from 3 to 2.4 cows per hectare, which we believe will be positive in terms of our environmental footprint. In summary our proposed farming operations would include;
 - 490-hectare landholding (330ha existing dairy platform, 60ha eastern block, 100ha northern block).
 - 22-hectare supplement block (consent is not sought for this block).
 - 1150 Peak Milked Cows.
 - Winter grazing up to 1200 cows (East Block excluded from winter grazing).
20. In addition to the above, and most importantly we seek to be able to spread the winter grazing around the whole property and not have it all locked into two small parcels of land which contains some contours that are not suitable for winter grazing. In proposing to winter a maximum 1200 cows across the whole area (490 hectares) we will be reducing a significant amount of intensive winter grazing which was being done by the previous owner on what is in our view land (Northern Block) not suited to such intensity. In our eyes our proposal is helping the environment considerably.
21. In the past up to 2000 cows were grazed on the Northern Block, an area of 100 hectares. Our proposal is to winter graze up to 1200 cows across the whole 490 hectares (excluding East Block), while peak cows in milk will not exceed 1150 cows. This is a considerable reduction in intensity in terms of what has already been occurring in our catchment.

22. Again, the benefits of this are:

- Our stocking rate reduces from 3.0 to 2.4 cows per/hectare
- We can choose which paddocks are best suited for winter grazing
- We can follow best farm management practice over all three blocks, and this is controlled via a resource consent and a Farm Environmental Management Plan
- We can be self-contained – so we are in control of our environmental footprint.

23. Having considered the report prepared by Environment Southland (Section 42a Report), and the matters raised in respect to the potential effects on the East Block, I can confirm that I have discussed possible mitigation measures with Mrs. Hunter, and I am happy to make changes to the proposed farming activity to ensure that;

- No fodder crops are grown on the East Block
- No stock are carried on the East Block during June & July
- No Effluent Solids are applied to the East Block
- Reduced Nitrogen (urea) inputs to the East Block.

24. Making these changes does not impact upon the overall viability of our proposed farm system. As we understand such changes will result in a lower environmental footprint, we are more than happy to accommodate them to add to the overall positive effects of our proposal.

25. In addition, we are very aware of the importance of managing all laneways throughout the property to avoid the build-up of material. We will also identify all critical source areas and where necessary provide further buffer zones to manage risk on an as required basis. We are committed to farming in accordance with the details set out in the Farm Environment Management Plan and in ensuring that Good Management Practices are implemented at all times.

Issues Concerning the Effluent Pond

26. When we undertook our original conversion (2014) we over-built our effluent pond so that we had more than 90 days effluent holding, despite this being greater than what was required by Environment Southland at that time. This means we can be selective on which days we apply effluent. The addition of 150 cows can be accommodated within the existing storage volumes required by the Massey Effluent Calculations and still give us sufficient storage for management purposes.

27. We also have an Environment Southland Weather and Soil Condition Data Station on our property which is very helpful in assisting us in determining when soil conditions are appropriate for effluent application.

28. The extra size of this storage pond along with data provides extra security and flexibility to avoid the need to apply effluent when soil conditions are not suitable or are marginal.
29. Over 18 months ago, during our pre-application meeting(s) with Environment Southland, we discussed the state of our existing effluent pond and we were subsequently advised by the Consents Officer at the time that we would not need a drop test on our clay-lined effluent pond as she had viewed it and was satisfied with its condition given at the time it was less than five years old.
30. We would have been happy to do a drop test but were told it was not necessary, and as such proceeded on the basis such a test was not required. We understand that the timeframe to undertake such a test is unable to be met prior to the hearing, and as such we would be happy to have a condition of consent which requires a drop test to be undertaken, and if necessary undertake remedial work on the pond, albeit we are confident of the integrity of our existing pond.

Summary

31. Prior to starting this process some 18 months ago, we sought to engage the advice of a range of experts to ensure that we undertake the proposed addition of land and cows in a manner which minimised effects on the environment. Our approach has always been to think things through by talking to the right people and take time to consider that advice and make sure we do it right.
32. We are aware that intensification of land in Southland is under scrutiny and while we are asking to go up a small number of cows we feel that shifting the winter grazing from such an intensive small area will certainly be beneficial to the environment, as will the overall reduction in stocking rate (and intensity) of our operations.
33. As family farmers we genuinely believe that this proposal is better for the environment and more sustainable long term than the current farming system. This farm is our life not just our business, and we are driven to be good stewards of the land for not only ourselves but for our children.

Mike & Cindy Adams

28 April 2019