

## Appendix 1 – Chair’s Report

### Chairman’s Report Mataura Catchment Liaison Committee Gore RSA 21<sup>st</sup> February 2023

After a late AGM last year it is good that we are back to a more timely AGM.

It is exactly three years since our record Southland flood had us on high alert and exposed potential weaknesses in our readiness for flooding. (In contrast to that time Southland is currently experiencing exceptionally dry conditions with risk of wild fires!) We must be grateful to Central Government for the funds available for ‘Shovel Ready’ projects and to the initiative of Environment Southland staff who put forward the need for up-grading the flood-banks of Gore, Mataura and Wyndham. All be it that 25% of that funding has to be found from our own coffers! Work is currently underway on these. Committee members are invited to inspect this after this meeting.

In contrast to this current ‘dry’ that we are experiencing we are witnessing on TV the catastrophic affects of Cyclone ‘Gabrielle’ which has hit the North Island, particularly the west of Auckland, Coromandel, Gisborne, and Hawkes Bay. In some parts 350 mls of rain has fallen in less than a 24 hour period. This, combined with 140 Kilometre winds and saturated ground has resulted in the loss of life, massive damage to infrastructure and to agriculture. Full assessment of this is yet to be determined. A salutary reminder of adequate flood control!

This has to sharpen our focus on this committee, to all ES staff and to the responsibility we all have to ensure we are adequately prepared for extreme events. I am not implying that we will have a tropical Cyclone of equal magnitude here in the South but, by the same token, there will be no one present here that will adamantly state that “this will never happen”.

So what should we learn as lessons from the North? As an example I would like to suggest the following;

- That, every man women and child is impacted by this catastrophic event.
- That, the power of nature may always have the last say, as it were, in testing our flood protection our resilience and our livelihoods.
- That, which-ever way we look at it, the overriding factor is one of cost.  
Cost in lives, cost in repairs, cost in loss of property and production, and, cost to the country as a whole.

This clearly shows that river matters, water quality, soil conservation, responsible forestry operations and agricultural practice, food supply, communications, power supply, to name just a few, affects EVERY ONE!

That is why this committee has, on the one hand, supported that part of the terms of reference that refer to the whole of Catchment mountains to the sea.

But equally, it is also the reason why this committee is frustrated by their adoption without committee involvement. At last year’s AGM a resolution was approved to *enable input and adoption by this committee of the ‘Terms of Reference’* This has not happened!

Also at last year's AGM the following was recommended;

*"Strongly recommended the additional term 'Soil Conservation' As advisers to Council we expect our views to be respected. We do not expect to re-litigate this topic and we hereby request, without resolution, that the term 'Soil Conservation' be included in the terms of reference. And;*

*"Areas of opportunity are in: water quality and quantity, soil conservation and quality, river management and Flood planning, land drainage as well as water retention (wetlands and water storage) land management that affects water."*

THIS HAS NOT BEEN ADDED TO THE ATTACHED 'terms of Reference'

I have become adamant that this matter does not need any more litigation. Please ES just get this done.

Another matter of concern expressed by committee members includes the heavy handed influence by IWI. Major decisions are being scuttled by members of IWI flexing their indigenous muscles by interfering unduly with progress.

The same goes for Fish and Game. Yes, they were successful in getting a conservation order out on the Mataura for restricting water flow. Ok, that may protect their right to catch those introduced species of trout, but it works against the option for controlling flood water.

Despite this restriction, the opportunity still exists to incentivise the building of multitudes of small dams that may buffer hill country run-off and, at the same time, provide an opportunity for native planting and increased bio-diversity.

So where are IWI and Fish and Game? Have we any representative at this meeting?

Another concern expressed by committee members is the increase in forestry without a corresponding requirement for controlling slash from harvested trees. East Coast residents are furious about the loss of their access by bridges being washed away. We can see for ourselves from footage and pictures that debris from tree harvesting has built-up at bridges until the weight of flood water has swept those bridges away. This needs to be discussed at this meeting. Particularly in the light of a Central Government providing ill-considered incentives for tree planting on good productive farmland.

For those in attendance at the last combined chairs meeting at Winton we were very encouraged by what appeared to be a commitment by Tania Hawkins and Randal Beal to have a completely ground-up approach to a rating review. The matter of 'who pays' when it comes to the budget that we are about to consider. Progress on this will be discussed under General Business.

Cyclone Gabrielle has well and truly illustrated that everyone is affected and, equally, everyone needs to contribute to the best mitigation that we can implement.

I welcome you all to this meeting and encourage full frank and open discussion by all present.

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