**John and Wendy Roe – Submisson to Bay of Plenty Regional Council Plan Change 10**

**I would like to open this address with a couple of quotations….**

**“ALL THE WATER THAT WE HAVE IS ALL WE HAVE EVER HAD AND ALL WE WILL HAVE”**

**Rotorua District Council employee to a group of 12 yr. olds at Water Treatment Plant, Rotorua**

**“THERE IS NO MORE LAND” - Ngaire Roe – my late mother-in-law**

**In other words.. Look after what you have**

**These are words often repeated in our family and illustrate part of our philosophy about farming in our very special country.**

**Farming sustainably is not only about being mindful of and protecting our waterways; it is about recognising, nurturing and improving our environment. We conscientiously consider the ramifications of our farming practices on our environment. We have “fenced off" over 30 ha of native bush and/or steep country and planted thousands of natives on our farm. Apart from the obvious benefits of maintaining native species, protecting waterways and shelter, and the return of birdsong, the trees absorb Carbon dioxide from the air and release oxygen.**

**Our ancestors came to Mamaku in the 1890s to mill Rimu. They pioneered milling and farming here. (While battling “bush sickness” etc.) In 1927 part of the family “walked off” the land and worked elsewhere for some years.**

**However …”THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER IN MAMAKU” and they returned in 1945 and carried on.**

**Like other farmers in the area, it was a matter of clearing bush and establishing good pastoral land.**

**Whilst other farmers cleared all their land, the Roes left patches of bush standing – which attracted some ridicule on “discussion group” days, until they paused for conversation on the sheltered side of standing bush!**

**In 1981, John told his father that “This is the last bush we will clear!**

**A telling statement!**

**With the intention to continue farming in Mamaku John and his brother purchased and developed adjoining land until, in 1984, it was separated into two farms and we took on the South Rd land, farming a couple of thousand sheep and 50 or so Friesian steers, whilst John’s brother continued milking on the dairy farm.**

**Over the ensuing years, we have spent many hours (and many dollars) developing our farm into a sustainable, productive entity with a minimal environmental footprint.**

**The Catchment Commission’s actions in the early 80s to protect our waterways means that Farmers and landowners “got the message” a long time ago about stock getting into waterways!**

**In the 80s, the (then) ” Bay of Plenty Catchment Commission” came along and told us that we had to fence off any land that may drain into a waterway or the headland of any waterway – in order to restrict the movement of Phosphate into waterways and protect fish (Trout) in the Ngongotaha Stream. Approximately 13 ha of land were signed into a 99 year lease. We were paid $8,000 to maintain the fences (for 99 years!)**

**Whilst we were unimpressed by what seemed to be a “decree and land grab”, we could understand the sense of this action. In retrospect, the Catchment commission should be applauded for recognising this need and acting upon it.**

**We rationalised that we could survive and farm without this area. Since that time, we have “fenced off” other significant land/bush, some of which is in QEII covenant. This is part of our “sustainable” approach to the land that we farm.**

**We believe that such land retirement should be acknowledged under the rules. We had a sustainable plan going forward, whilst other land owners did not. Then the Regional Council came up with an environmental plan which requires us all to further reduce our environmental footprint with no allowance for what has already been done voluntarily. We knowingly made some economic sacrifices early – now we are expected to make such sacrifices which may well put us into an area of economic risk and difficulty.**

**In 2012 we commissioned a feasibility study to purchase adjacent 121 ha dairy farm, combine the two blocks and create a new dairy farm, retaining some dry stock. We presented this study to the Regional Council and were told “I wish more people would pick this up and run with it!”**

**In October 2012, we purchased the property and created our dairy farm with a milking platform of approximately 280ha. There is one block of native bush on this title – John had a temporary fence around that bush in the first week!**

**We continue to farm by our own standards as stewards of the land. We are definitely on path to reach required reduction by 2022.**

**I have to tell you, though, that whilst we have been true to our own farming philosophies, the past two years have taken their toll! The scariest thing being that we have barely (hopefully) survived 2 years with a low pay-out – how will we cope financially with future increases in costs of compliance and drops in production! (thereby income) as we move to meet the 2032 targets - no matter what happens to the milk pay-out!**

**We support the right environmental solutions for Lake Rotorua but the solutions must be fair and equitable across the entire community. Our elected representatives on Council have chosen to notify the rules, even though the lake is already at or near the target level required and there is legitimate concern around the evidence, the science, the accuracy and enforcement.**

**We believe that authorities have not done enough to get the wider Rotorua Community on board to improve Lake Rotorua. Where are the initiatives to get everyone in the community to “do their bit” to improve our lake? When and how has the Regional Council engendered basic information about what constitutes pollutants to the lake and how we can all make a difference? In the early stages of STAG, BOPRC ran a competition for initiatives that would reduce nitrogen in the lake. It stalled due to lack of interest. Whilst we read numerous reports about how the council would regulate farmers etc. to improve the lake, the general populous was not engaged. People would and do ask “what are you farmers doing about the lake?” In the early days of the Strategy Advisory Group, we had to ask Regional Council to refrain from using words like “polluters” in the press, when talking about farmers in the catchment. I have sat at numerous STAG meetings alongside the Rotorua Farmers Collective and heard outrageous statements about farmers (dairying in particular) by a variety of people.**

**What would happen to the TLI of Lake Rotorua if every household stopped (or even halved) using detergents that contain phosphates?**

**How much work has the Regional Council put into working alongside the District to solve the sewage problems faced by this district?**

**The Plan Change 10 Rules to be imposed on pastoral land owners are neither fair, nor equitable. The impact on our property has and will continue to affect:**

* **Devaluation of original farm due to being in Rule 11 boundary (2012) approx... $10,000 per ha.**
* **Banks imposition of 20% reduction in value when calculating ‘risk’ (some banks less)**
* **Increased rates at District Council and Regional Council level.**
* **Immeasurable amount of extra time and energy to calculate whether or not we are operating “within the rules**
* **Increased costs of using professionals, etc. to ensure we are on the “right path”**
* **Interruption to family succession. Who would want to invest their lives (and livelihood) in a farm operating with such limitations? We didn’t go farming to have to justify everything we do to some anonymous individual who has little or no concept of the big picture.**
* **We object to being “labelled” as polluters, etc. by Council representatives, greenies, etc. because we are “farmers”!**
* **We pride ourselves on farming in an environmentally sustainable way – in more ways than just protecting waterways and the lake!**
* **We are aware of only one dairy farm that has sold within this catchment over the past few years!**

**“DON’T BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS YOU”**

**Whilst the Regional Council did commission an Economic Impact Report (as required by law), it did so very late. So late, in fact, that it seems to us that it was a “tick the box” exercise on their part.**

**For some years of this journey, there was no evidence that the Regional Council had any regard for the economic health of the Rotorua community, let alone the economic viability of individual farmers in this catchment. By the time this “belated” Economic Impact Report was commissioned, the Council was years down the track and its rules were already well embedded in the community “psyche”.**

**The “Catchment” seems to be a bit of a “no-go” area for banks. We are private land owners and undertook new mortgages in order to purchase land and farm it sustainably. When we purchased the 100ha dairy farm, the Valuer took 30% off our existing land value (Weakening our standing with the Bank) – because it was in the catchment! The bank increased rates – the “RISK FACTOR”? Along came two consecutive years of low milk pay-outs and suddenly the Bank is worried – risk level has gone up! Come up with a plan! (Hey, nothing new, we all knew there would be peaks and troughs) – So some micro-management from the bank! This added on to the intention of our regional council who want to “micro manage” our farm.**

**We do not support the Policies, Method or Rules of Plan Change 10. We do not support the nitrogen discharge allowance process and the requirement that land owners reduce nutrient loss by way of regulation. We do not support the requirement for land owners to complete farm management plans that will be part of a Compliance Process. We do not support the Bay of Plenty Regional Council micro-managing our farming business. It is impossible to develop a plan committing ourselves to actions up to 15 years in the future. Reginal and District Councils are only required to make 10 Year Plans – and they get an annual review!**

***John and Wendy Roe* Roesville Farms 2012 Ltd**