

AFFCO New Zealand - Pre-hearing Meeting held at The Orchard Church, 20 MacLoughlin Drive, Te Puke on Tuesday, 24 February at 1:20 pm

Present:

Bay of Plenty Regional Council: Marlene Bosch (Chair) and Mel Jones/
Rachael Musgrave (Note takers)

Processing Planner for BOPRC: Todd Whittaker, Planning Works

Present: Vanessa Hamm, Luke Gowing (ARGO), Albert van Erstrem,
David White, Gary Venison, Chris Bruns, Dean Tucker
(Operations Manager), Paul Rolleston (Plant Manager),
Todd Whittaker (Planning Works), Raewyn Bennett (Ngāti
Pikiao Environmental Society), Helen Biel, ?, ? Support Helen,
Lee Williams (support person), Julian Fitter, Barry
(Freshwaters Group).

1 Welcome and introductions

Marlene Bosh opened the meeting at 1.20 pm. Introduced herself and Todd Whitaker.

Marlene advised those present that it was beneficial for Council to hear any views/issues. Will now had over to AFFCO to run the meeting but will be take notes and happy to answer any questions.

Following today's meeting, a hearing date has been set for 15 August 2022, possibly Tuesday to Thursday. There have been three Independent Commissioners appointed for the hearing Rob Voorthuysen, Gina Sweetman and Siani Walker.

Roundtable introductions (AFFCO, BOPRC, Submitters)

2 AFFCO

Referred to the PowerPoint presentation circulated to the room.

Following the previous pre-hearing meeting, AFFCO have followed up on several issues raised.

AFFCO's objective today is for submitters as stakeholders to raise their concerns and issues.

AFFCO referred submitters to the issues raised and outcomes sought from the previous meeting provided in the handout supplied.

AFFCO met with WBOPDC to talk to through the initiatives and treatment capacity at the wastewater treatment plant. Any final land disposal for the plant – it's a matter of balancing the costs of land purchase and reticulation against the environmental effects. AFFCO feels they have looked at a range of options for land disposal, targeted irrigation and there might be some opportunity for partial irrigation in the summer but the disposal of all the water from the AFFCO plant is not feasible for year-round application.

- S Te Puke wastewater plant, looking at the size of the plant you may wish to consider that. You need more flexibility with your consent conditions, when they shut the Okere Gates you may want to consider land irrigation then, and then discharge January-March when the Kaituna River is low.
- S Why are you using so much water during the day, have you cut down the usage to the minimum amount possible?
- A Yes, have done work on conserving water and continue to do so but do need assurance with the consent in regard to future growth, it's a strategic asset for AFFCO, however it is our interests to save water.
- S Tour of the site helped with doubts, it seems most of the water use is in refrigeration and is a good ~90 percent of the discharge.
- A We discussed that today. Net take is on average 0, puts back as much as it takes, on a dry day would use as much as a kiwifruit orchard.
- S From a community perspective there is far too much water used from the Kaituna River, not just by AFFCO. Iwi/hapū don't see any reduction in the take. AFFCO might not think it is much water but from our perspective it is over exceeded. AFFCO is a key stakeholder in this community it would be sign of collaboration to meet and talk with other key stakeholders to address issues, we get told we must collaborate so why is it not possible for AFFCO and others to have regular interactions, so it is not fragmented with everyone doing their own thing.
- A In terms of the wastewater being discharged to Te Puke WWTP – AFFCO has discussed this matter with the District Council and has been advised that for hydraulic flow reasons, the Te Puke WWTP (9,000 m³/day capacity) would be unable to accept Rangiora's waste flow (6500 m³/day dry weather).
- S Need Te Puke WWTP to come and tell us that as that is not what we've heard.
- A We are just relaying that they have said to us.
- S Looking at AFFCO discharge it looks pretty small the volume coming out?
- A Yes, the volume is very small.
- S Your volume is very small during the summer compared to Te Puke WWTP.
- The comment about WWTP not coping with the quality, maybe we can find out who you were talking to so we can clarify what that is about.
- A Te Puke WWTP are unable to take the water because of the amount/loading from AFFCO – too large, not about the quality. The plant is not sized to take the discharge from AFFCO and the ability to be able to clean it sufficiently to return it to the system. It also isn't sized to cater for growth in population and the extent of growth projection.
- S So what you are saying is the flow rate is the issue, it is too much for WWTP to take?
- A Yes and the pipe location to get it there. AFFCO can follow up on this again and particularly address the issue of the quality.

S Amount of nitrogen not being able to be able to be dealt with by Te Puke WWTP, what you are discharging 350 kg per day, calculations amount to discharge of about 100 tonne per year is that right?

A It is a lot less than that, I can get you the precise figures.

S If my figures are roughly correct, about 8% of your nitrogen is going to the river. Ratepayers have spent a significant amount of money to reduce their nitrogen, it seems very high.

A It's not that high, it is within the consent limits.

S If you could give a figure, in 10 years' time, BOPRC are trying to reduce the nitrogen into the river, what's your plan?

The community would like to know what reductions there will be in the future. Retiring a lot of land from farming to prevent dairy effluent entering waterways. Strong desire from BOPRC to clean up the waterways. Not just BOPRC, other groups too.

A AFFCO's nitrogen would be hard for the WWTP to remove, would need a major change to the way the wastewater is treated. We know how much is going into the river every day and we can calculate AFFCOs nitrogen load going into the river, it will be less than 8%. There is a lot less nitrogen than there used to be due to improvements at the plant.

S Would be better if we could send that information to our iwi environmental person.

A I think it's in the AEE, but we can supply that. (Recommendation to contact Pim de Monchy)

The next point around Glyceria in the wetland and the perceived role in seeding weed infestations in the downstream catchment - Glyceria is widespread throughout the catchment. The Rangiuru wetland area is only 3.3 ha in the broader context of a 1,218 ha catchment. Glyceria is a recognised wastewater wetland plant.

The wetland was originally designed and installed at the request of iwi for renewal of the previous consent- AFFCO consider the wetland is operating effectively but is open to evaluating whether extra planting/maintenance works is required.

Glyceria was chosen specifically as it is highly beneficial for nitrogen removal.

S My thought is you plant the plant, and it grows but then if that plant dies, they all stay there and rot down, so you are not actually getting rid of them, you possibly need some larger trees in there to absorb and remove.

A The mechanism of Glyceria and the habitat further downstream. The whole idea behind wetland treatment is not about removing nitrogen by removing the plants, you would need to harvest and remove the plants which is costly. Glyceria was chosen because it helps to remove nitrate and dies back and produces carbon. Glyceria is one of the best plants around for that purpose.

S My question is then, because it is an alien species, we needed to look for something that is more effective and a native species and not going to cause problems later on

down the track. We need to think about the health of the river overall, if banks are covered with Glyceria we are going to lose native species.

- A The wetland was approved under iwi consultation, they could be replaced by alternative methods but would need to be looked at. We could look at the Glyceria in there and see how it can be managed, weed control and maintenance and we have offered a condition to look at alternative plants.
- S We have a habit of introducing something to try and fix/control something else which then in turn causes other problems – that is concerning.
- S We should be looking at using a native species not Glyceria. It has become widespread throughout the catchment which is concerning. You have already acknowledged that Glyceria is a problem in the catchment, but you have not said you are willing to look at other native species. You shouldn't be using it just because it's more affordable.
- A Apologies if we've been unclear, we have added a condition saying we will look at this and explore other options instead of Glyceria.
- S If you want to restore the health of the river AFFCO should start taking some pride in the river and help clean it up. At the moment you're using the river, but you are not contributing to the health of the river.
- S Has AFFCO got an Environmental Improvement Plan – a lot of these consent conditions are "to be done" with the consent expiring in 2047 without any certainty that anything will be done. Pikiao wouldn't be able to sign off without this certainty.
- A We do for each individual site.
- S Are we able to see it, can we trust you?
- S Where is our input into that, it impacts us, we would like to have an input into that.
- S Pikiao have been quite specific about what we would like to happen, you take you must give back and at this minute AFFCO are not giving back. In 2047 without promises saying we may look at that, it's not good enough.
- A River signage – a point AFFCO accepts and is done at other sites. Has been added as a condition.
- UV treatment – added as a consent condition.
- S No one could show where the outfall was as there was an overgrown willow. Inanga at outfall are there because there is a discharge, how will the water be sampled?
- A There is a manhole where samples can be taken from, taking samples from the water are not very accurate and there are health and safety issues. Sampling from the river would be dangerous. At least a metre or 2 below the surface.
- S So the pipe in the future will be discharged where?
- A Below water level.
- S Why not discharge at water level so member of public can come along and take a sample and say ok the water is good?

- A AFFCO do their own sampling, it's just a matter of contacting AFFCO to safely access the manhole. We won't deny you access to do so.
- S So members of the public can go down, and do it?
- A Yes just contact AFFCO.
- S Everyone is talking about night discharges, there is mistrust there and unrest in the community about this. I can't see how AFFCO would achieve this, but it has been spoken about in the community.
- A Sampling is done around timing to get to the courier etc. and only done during business hours. There is no opportunity for night discharge by AFFCO. The monitoring programme AFFCO has is all year round.
- S Can you have that written in a consent that anyone can ask to take a sample?
- S I would like to be able to take a sample whenever I like without AFFCOs permission randomly at any time.
- A The issue is where the pipe is currently situated. You can sample under the water, if you have boat that will hold steady you could take samples. Perhaps AFFCO could explore a way for samples to be provided that won't cause a health and safety issue?
- S We just want you to make sure the water you are discharging to the water is as clean as it can be. We rely on the waterways to feed ourselves, that is the most important to us. We acknowledge AFFCO is not the only industry.
- S AFFCO is focusing only on themselves we need to do this together collectively.
- S Want to hear AFFCOs explanation or how you fill these (table items) with promises.
- A Maturation cell – agreed and added a condition to undertake a review to provide further information.
- S Seems to me reading that you are saying no.
- S So really these guys are concerned about swimming and gathering food. Most health issues come from bovine discharges the UV testing would help that.
- A But we know they are not there. AFFCO has done extensive testing to make sure. Independent testing has taken place and proved this to be low. In the AEE there is a report independent of AFFCO who looked at that very issue.
- S Would be interested in seeing data showing a reduction of pathogens.
- A Pathogen's weren't sampled historically, this data is not available for last 20 years. The Regional Council may have this data which would be available to the public.
- S The assessment of the awa through monitoring - assessments that come from a Māori perspective are you aware there are tools? Is this something AFFCO would consider looking into and support?

A The effects of the Māori and mauri – the intent is to look at that impacts of that. AFFCO have tried to address this in conditions 9, set up a Monitoring Committee looking at the mauri of the Kaituna River and in addition to the Environmental Monitoring Plan.

S Does that include specialists? Are you aware that Māori Advisory groups are working with specialists about mauri in the river? Are you prepared to let Māori work alongside you and have an input to your Western science?

A Yes, absolutely.

Smell in river from the wastewater discharge – the discharge doesn't have a smell. This was confirmed in the site visit.

S Small stretch before and after AFFCO is where the smell is pungent, are you saying there is something wrong with our noses? There is a smell, especially in the summer.

A We are at a loss to figure that one out.

S The smell you can taste it.

A But is it the discharge?

S I don't know, that's my question to you.

A We'll keep monitoring and try and figure that one out.

Implications of change in the river – AFFCO's discharge calculations are based on the flow past the outlet – this remains the case irrespective of works elsewhere in the river.

S In the summer the flow rate in the river is not as high that has no effect on AFFCO.

A No everything is based on low flows and use low flow calculations to work it out.

S Are you monitoring your water temperature in relation to your discharge rate?

A Temperature is measured/monitored even though it is not a consent condition. BOD limits might need to be re looked at.

Scabies – have already discussed pathogens, it is unlikely the discharge is causing this.

S Not saying it's the wastewater but kids are getting scabies after swimming in the river.

A Other discharges to ground and then to river – Pond seepage is not currently an issue based on hydrogeological works undertaken by AFFCO.

Independent review of treatment system – taken on board as a consent condition. Any seepage is very minimal and well treated.

Install increased treatment facility – have included in consent conditions.

Capture stormwater from roof for use in processing – In this case AFFCO's view is given the river take is a zero take as in what is taken out goes back in, stormwater capture, and use would not be a practical option in dry weather.

Environmental monitoring – added in consent conditions.

Cultural monitoring – AFFCO met with treatment plant people and because of that AFFCO have included a consent condition to add an Environmental Management Plan and will be developed in consultation with the local iwi to develop the management plant.

- S Monitoring is an important feature, we should have the ability to talk openly with AFFCO and should have involvement with the wider community also (other community groups who have an interest in the river) the broader the base you have the better opportunity to come up with the right answers.
- S Back to capturing stormwater, in terms of the reduce take from the river, what about a secondary use for that pond, the pond close to the plant, you say that it's clean?
- A Recycle that defrost water?
- S Yes.
- S I can't see why you can't store and use the stormwater from the roof and use that in the dry season?
- A You are talking about a massive volume of water.
- S Is it the storage or the cost of treating the water that is the issue?
- A It's the storage and you'd have to calculate the size of the roof area, the amount of water that could be collected versus the amount of water needed for the plant.
- S Which company will be analysing your samples?
- A Eurofins or Hills.
- S Does the Regional Council get the samples?
- A They see the results and the compliance officer comes out and does regular checks. AFFCO does a lot of additional testing over and above what is required.
- S Has there been any DNA testing around the estuary to confirm it has come from AFFCO?
- A Where a discharge was occurring that we weren't sure about, AFFCO at other sites has done sampling but down river would be more difficult.

Conditions

AFFCO highlighted they have taken on board after the initial pre-hearing:

Discharge conditions

- Environmental monitoring – condition 9.6 ecological monitoring plan for the river, it covers some of the issues previously raised.
 - Getting feedback to the Environmental Monitoring Committee – inform AFFCO and Regional Council on the effects and expanding the membership. Will add conditions to expand a bit more. Will take on board Julian's suggestion to open to other groups.
- S Is there a condition about the monitoring of the Glyceria? I feel is it a big concern.

A Yes, can't see a problem with that.

- Signage.
- Conditions 13 and 14 new – looking at the wetland etc. Where this is taken into account is in the review condition. These reports are provided to the Regional Council to do something about it if they have concerns about the quality in the river.

Take water consent

- Largely the same as the original consent but makes reference to the Monitoring Committee.
- Discharge of seepage to groundwater - have not changed.
- Human waste discharge – same.
- Defrost conditions – retained the original wording of the conditions.
- Will have a look at how we can recycle the water – from the early comment. Is worth looking at.

S Do you think you have address kaitiakitanga in the NRP to its fullest extent?

A We've tried to do this through the Environmental Monitoring Plan and address issues of concern to iwi and included issues of Mātauranga Māori in the development and included relying on the advice of the committee. Yes, I think we have tried to do that.

S I don't think their advice has been given effect to though.

S A sewerage treatment plant is costly but suggest in the good faith of the community if AFFCO would consider a scholarship to a young person as part of the consenting process/mitigation.

S Have you done an analysis of the Kaitiakitanga chapter?

Todd Whittaker advised AFFCO has addressed this in a number of assessments and reports. Todd suggested to AFFCO to prepare a full schedule of documentation so everything AFFCO has put forward across the board is available on the BOPRC website, so it is freely accessible.

S Page 12 10.2 (a) – Would like Maketū Estuary and other local environmental groups added. There are other users of the river we want to encourage to bring our river back to life.

A That's not a problem.

AFFCO thanked the submitters for their comments, acknowledged that they will take on board what has been raised and amend some of the conditions.

S Our people would rather not see AFFCO on the river but know this won't happen, the Regional Council are responsible also, the real victim here is our awa. What you take you need to give back. We appreciated the site visit to AFFCO at the same time we have lived on the mauri of the river but looking at the whenua that made me sad.

S Feel it has been a constructive meeting today, a positive step in the right direction.

S AFFCO have made a positive step in regard to engagement.

S Agree quite a bit has been taken on board and appreciate that.

Todd explained the hearing process and next steps from here to the submitters. Happy to answer any follow up questions.

Meeting closed at 3.41 pm