

Current state of collaborative capacity in land and water?

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Conflicting Views: “Sunday “TVNZ 9 April 2017 & Facebook posts

“This is Not the true image of how the 90 percent of farmers farm .. so townies u are still mislead .. Sunday u haven't done us proud at all so sad ”



“The problem isn't with dairy farmers it's their leadership; and their leadership that's captured regional councils and when dairy leadership pays for science and fights for nitrogen toxicity in our rivers - no one wins and their farmers are victims of this failure and the forked tongue stories”

p.s. Social media is bad for your mental health.

- Logan 2017

So why do “collaboration”?

The way people understand issues and problems affects actions about those issues. A process or approach that expands peoples’ understanding can result in more comprehensive solutions – Bardwell 1991

Why do collaboration?

- NZ is a participatory democracy
- Expands expertise and viewpoints
- Increases the chance of better integrated policies, rules etc.
- Increases likelihood of better implementation because those affected feel they have had a stake in how things are

The tortuous history of NZ's freshwater policy

- National soil & water conservation regime & catchment boards 1941-88
- 1991 RMA & Regional Councils (Minister Simon Upton wants an NPS in 1995)
- SWPOA Phase 1 2001-4
- SWPOA Phase 2 2005-2008
- New Start for freshwater 2008
- NPS 2011
- NPS 2014 & National objectives framework
- 2010s Govt. subsidies new irrigation projects & promotes economic development (compared to “hands off” approach of 1990s & 2000s)
- IT WAS BECAUSE OF THIS TORTUOUS HISTORY THAT NZ IS “EXPERIMENTING” WITH COLLABORATIVE PROCESSES

Why water policy?

- Because of the tortuous history
- Because of multiple stakeholders with many different views
- Because of the intersection of cultural, social and economic interests and values with environmental conditions and values
- Water and land use policy lies at the heart of what new Zealand is all about as a nation

Current State of collaboration

- National level: LAWF (2010) & now biodiversity (2016)
- Region-wide level: Canterbury (the first-off-the-block) (A regional committee process)
- Catchment - local - part region: Canterbury, Hawkes Bay, Waikato, Wellington with some smaller experiments elsewhere (e.g. CWMS zone committees, TANK, Waikato River catchment, Whaitua process)

LAWF & collaboration

- A “representative” collaboration drawing on the Scandinavian experience
- The Forum’s Second Report recommended that there should be a presumption that a collaborative approach should be used for freshwater planning, but recognised that regional councils can also use the current RMA/Schedule 1 process where collaboration may not be suitable

Some conditions for collaboration

- ensure adequate opportunities for public participation and engagement from start to finish
- ensure that there is provision for a rigorous, impartial evidence-based evaluation of information and proposals
- safeguard natural justice
- ensure that decisions are transparent and the rationale for decisions is clear.
- Ensure there is meaningful buy-in and support from officials and politicians

Benefits

- Increased public awareness of issues (which can bring its challenges
- Better buy in
- Stronger relationships with iwi, stakeholders & community
- While process can take longer (and might be more resource intensive, most (but not all!) plans, policies and rules seem to be of higher quality & many implementation issues better addressed (but not all!)

Challenges

- Undermines the role of democratically elected councillors – but does it?
- Requirement to develop timely plans (e.g. to address over-allocation as consents expire, or to meet the NPS-FM timeframes) means a full collaborative process is not practicable.
- Outputs of a collaborative group may be deconstructed in a Schedule 1 planning process (a possible risk for the Waikato CSG).
- Attempts to institutionalise collaboration may have created process barriers (RMLA)

So what do I think?

- Collaboration at a **national level** works and should be used e.g. NPS-FM & NOF & acceptance of environmental limits a huge step forward & and wouldn't have happened without LAWF.
- LAWF works because it is an open to all **stakeholders** , and in my experience, represents respectful engagement and best endeavours to reach **consensus**
- Officials are as yet not used to working with a collaborative system – still imbued by outdated policy teachings about the purity of policy advice between officials and ministers
- The Executive needs to be faster, smarter and more responsive in responding to collaborative consensus and if there are difficulties with that consensus, engaging (early) and explaining why.

So what do I think?

- Collaboration at a regional & local level works – WHERE IT HAS BEEN CAREFULLY THOUGH THROUGH & SUPPORTED
- Mix of community & stakeholder reps seems to work best (but needs careful thought)
- Ensure strong involvement by elected councilors (seems best when there are some on the collaborative groups committed to taking the collaborative view back to elected councillors)
- Policies, plans & rules must be developed hand-in-glove with consultative groups. Decision-making and plan writing need to be transparent and agreed at the outset.