

Clean Waters to the Sea

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## Media Release - RENEWED NRC CONSENT FOR TAIPA WASTEWATER TO BE CHALLENGED

Local Doubtless Bay catchment guardianship group Clean Waters to the Sea (CWTS) will challenge the legality of the NRC resource consent re-issued for the FNDC operation of the Taipa East Coast Wastewater Treatment Plant, as they don't see any improvement in local water quality even after this 10 year process.

The commissioners have given an 8 year consent with pollution parameters unchanged from the original consent that expired in 2008. And even worse, they have doubled the allowable water volume for a plant that is already demonstratively not coping now.

Their report released on 26 August 2019 ignored the extensive CWTS submission. The commissioners cited confusion in justifying ignoring the economically sound option presented by CWTS, using electro coagulation EC2 water cleaning technology that has already been successfully trialled at the Taipa plant in the past year.

CWTS Trustee and submitter Mr Andreas Kurmann said in response "I cannot understand how the commissioners could be confused, because all our evidence was based on the scientific data that our Electro Coagulation EC2 trial produced. We showed that we achieved safe levels of nitrates, phosphorus, ammonia and bacteria before discharge from the wastewater plant, so what could be clearer?" He went on to say "the worst aspect of this report is the absence of any consideration of phosphorus, which is the driving contaminate of algal blooms. All over the world waterways are being cleaned up with strict rules on phosphorus, but here we still ignore our most serious clean water problem. The NRC consent process was set up because of objections to water pollution from the wastewater plant, but then it fails to address that very issue. This is unacceptable."

The report focuses on discharge options, which was a predominant focus of the original 50 submissions in opposition to the consent in 2010. "But that was a decade ago, and since then the EC2 trial has shown we have a cheap and effective solution at hand with the EC units.

This supercedes that original focus on disposal options, and makes the commissioners decision to designate the CWTS information as 'new evidence' that is unable to be considered, both counterproductive and very unwise" Mr Kurmann said.

"The same reason was given for not considering our photographic evidence of algal blooms both within the wastewater plant and the receiving environment. Yet 'new evidence' within the FNDC submission was accepted? This is inexplicable and unbalanced."

It is for these very good reasons that CWTS rejects the legality of this consent decision. Together with Mana O Te Wai Hapu Integration Roopu, a group of four local Hapu submitters, CWTS has lodged an appeal with NRC. "We see this as not just an issue for the Far North, but a test case for the whole of NZ to seriously address phosphorus as well as nitrates and E.coli in our waterways. We have the technology to achieve clean water and are determined to see it used. Not only in wastewater plants, but farms as well. It is breakthrough technology that achieves not only clean water from contaminated sources but being cheaper, will save a lot of money for both ratepayers and farmers in comparison to current water treatment practices that actually don't work."

As for the recommendation to form a working group with Ngati Kahu and FNDC representatives, "we would like to see the broader community represented as well, and of course are willing to remain constructively involved. But tighter terms of reference beyond disposal options to include wastewater plant upgrade and management will be needed."

With the consent process now entering its second decade, Mr Kurmann, who has previously spoken of his Swiss career involving concurrent oversight of 44 Swiss wastewater plants went on to say "I am willing to consult directly to the FNDC on management of the current Taipa plant facility. I feel confident I can double it's effectiveness. This will benefit our receiving environment of Awapoko Stream and the Aurere outfall in the interim until a plant upgrade is achieved. And we can measure those results."

**Wayne Parsonson, Trudy Crerar, Jill Garrett, Tiger Tukariri, Stephen Tansey, Andreas Kurmann  
Trustees - Clean Waters to the Sea**

### ***OUR VISION***

***To facilitate the restoration, maintenance and protection of a high standard of water quality within all the water ways of the Tokarau - Doubtless Bay catchment.***

Example of a commercial EC unit



*Algal bloom at Taipa Waste Water Treatment Plant - Dec 2017*