
FARMER PERSPECTIVE

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Chris Sutton is no stranger to Rotorua's political and environmental scene. He has been involved in Project Rerewhakaaitu for over 10 years. He was also a member of the Land Use Futures Board, past Provincial President of Rotorua/Taupo Federated Farmers and National Vice Chairman of the Federated Farmers Dairy Section. Chris and Rosemary Sutton have farmed 105 hectares in Rerewhakaaitu for 23 years. Up until three years ago they were milking 260 cows, today they fatten heifers and steers. Chris and Rosemary are thoroughly enjoying the change in stock class within the new farm system.

TRANSCRIPT

When we did the biography and it was only 100 words, I gave it to my wife and said, 'Well there we are, 30 to 40 years gone'.

We are beef farmers now. We went to the Rerewhakaaitu area as dairy farmers and four years ago, on 23 September 2013, we sold the dairy cows and moved into a beef unit. We have been a beef unit ever since on 100 hectares. When we first got married, Rosemary was a nurse from Te Whaiti and we both decided to own a lifestyle block either at Kaharoa or Rerewhakaaitu and ended up buying at Rerewhakaaitu in a roundabout fashion.

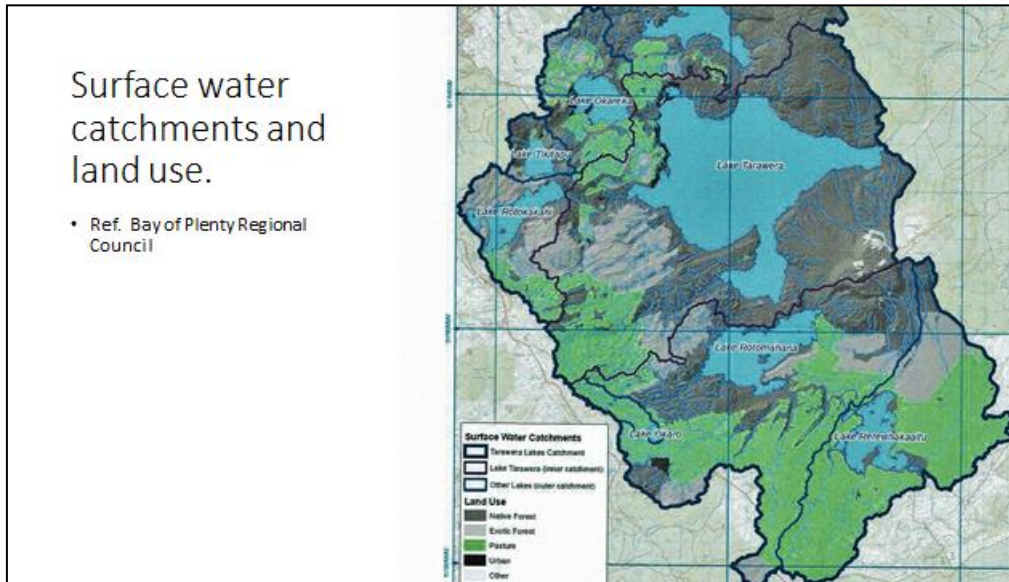
Thanks very much to those who have said good things about Project Rerewhakaaitu. I get embarrassed about it. I sit down and go, 'Well, what have we done, what did we do?' I find it a little hard to handle that compliment, sorry about that, but thanks very much anyway. It is good to know that (due to time constraints) there is no discussion afterwards.

So we get to Paul White. I am the only well in Rerewhakaaitu scoring 8 and we all know why. It has nothing to do with the farm. As you move towards Rotomahana and Tarawera, the wells get a little lower and in the end they are about 4 - 4.5 pmm. The work that we have done shows that if we measured some of the wells up in the forest, unbeknown to the forest owners, then went down through the catchment, we do have an input. There is a footprint and that is expected but it does not show an increase as you go towards Tarawera, where the water is supposed to go. So just remember that.

We need to acknowledge the staff and personnel of the following, without whom this would not be possible:-

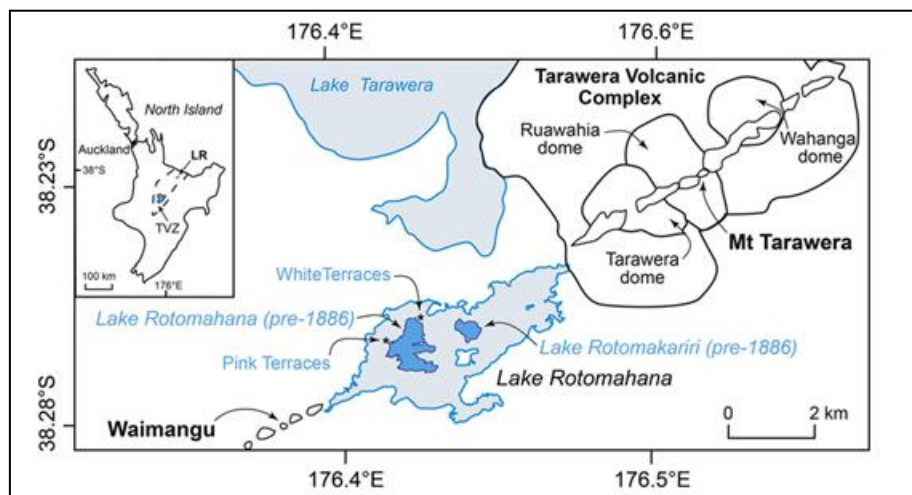
- AgResearch
- Fruition
- Dairy New Zealand
- Beef+Lamb New Zealand
- Bay of Plenty Regional Council
- Rotorua Te Arawa Lakes Strategy Group
- Blackman Spargo
- Fonterra
- Sustainable Farming Fund
- The farmers

Without them nothing would happen and I would not be standing here if it was not for AgResearch and Fruition. I went to a symposium in 2002 and met Mike O'Connor of AgResearch and Bob Parker from Fruition. After I got up and asked a couple of questions they came out to Rerewhakaaitu and from there the project grew. There is a 7-page summary of the project up until 2015 available outside for those interested. The entire group has helped us out over the many years. Fonterra is now involved and the Sustainable Farming Fund and farmers.



This shows the surface water catchments and land use of the area and I farm over on the bottom left in the Rerewhakaaitu catchment. Rerewhakaaitu 1A2B is a lot of land. They have just had it handed back after a 99-year lease, 'lease' being a polite word. Onuku is another big player. Both blocks have got 3 or 4 dairy farms and a large sheep and beef unit. The same with Onuku and Lake Okaro. The dairy farms stop just past Lake Okaro on the Okaro/Waimangu Road. They are predominantly dairy but not intensively dairying. (pointing to Rotomahana & Rerewhakaaitu lakes catchments). Several own quite a few farms. I only own one and not that rich.

From here on around it is sheep and beef and we have been asked to pick up Crater Lake Farm. They are not great players as far as high stocking rates go. There are some privately owned forest areas. There are also a couple of little private forests.



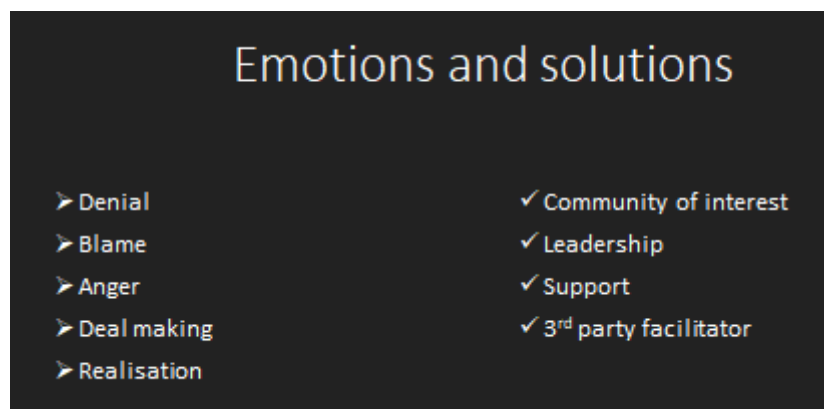
The above slide is another map showing the White Terraces and the two small lakes (Lake Rotomahana and Lake Rotomakariri) prior to 1886 and the Pink Terraces. There are steaming cliffs and it is quite active. We had Professor Hamilton out recently. He told us a year ago that between 60% to 70% of the phosphorus entering this lake is coming from geothermal. GNS rate this lake to be as volcanically active as White Island at idle. It is humming along and goes up and down. Andy Bruere tells me it breaks out into Tarawera every now and then and so do the hunters.

The average take home pay to the guides prior to the 1886 eruption was £10,000. The museum says it was £8,000 but a YouTube presentation in the Council Chambers by Te Arawa had it at £10,000 and I believe them.

If I understand correctly, the hotel was owned by local Iwi and Crays was the manager. Bainbridge Road is over our way and Mr Bainbridge was the gentleman killed in the hotel. The rocks that you see at the Buried Village came from Tarawera but did not land originally at the village but north of Lake Rerewhakaaitu. One of the members on our committee took 16 truckloads of rocks to the Buried Village. Do not believe everything you see in town especially if it is Rotovegas. It is a tourist town.

When you put something together in the community by social reengineering and say, 'Hey, you have got to stop doing what you are doing, you get denial. With the work and positions I have been given, one of which is on the Upper Waikato Catchment Committee, I have got to know staff there who have put together a similar project to what we have here in Rerewhakaaitu on the Whirinaki arm. It will be good to see that happen. We went out to Waiotahi the other day to sit with some farmers.

Back in 2002 we did not have the support that we have now. We turn up to meetings and people from DairyNZ, Fonterra and the Regional Council are all there to help. The hand has been extended and you have to take it up, and you do. But there is another hand and it has not got a carrot. We went through denial and blame. We blamed the forestry or we blamed the farmer next-door, the new guy, the big guy and all the rest of them. We went through all those things. There is the anger and sometimes you get them all back to front. You try and make a deal and then the realisation comes.



These are all the emotions you get with any sort of trauma that happens in a family. But the thing is, while you are trying to save the environment, the general population does not understand that Rosemary and I and the kids have put everything into the farm for the last 30 - 40 years and you want us to change.

Sure, we changed three or four years ago and are most probably the better for it, but that is what these farmers go through. When you go to the community as a staff member of one of the agencies that is what you are dealing with. The easiest way is to find the community of interest. We have that in Rerewhakaaitu. There was always interest in the mountain and the lake. We cleaned up the pines around the lake. Woodsman came from Woodsmen School and cleaned up the mountain. We all did it together as a community.

Leadership is a big thing. We started out with three of us - Mike, Bob and myself. We grew to a group of 5 or 6, then to 10 and now we have 15. We needed support and had AgResearch, the science support, and support from the Regional Council. It is good to have a third-party, a facilitator, which was like a filter. It stops the shit going both ways. At the beginning it was necessary but good staff on the Regional Council made a difference.

✓ We want to work with BOPRC.

✓ If we are part of the problem then we need to be part of the solution

✓ We believe that if farmers are fully involved in the process they will take ownership of the solution

Challenges

- "Take control of our destiny." B Bayfield.
- "Take ownership of the Project." W Murray.
- "Ensure that farmers understand the science so they can understand the solutions." M Barton
- "Hunt as a pack and get ahead of the wave." D Leeder
- "You have to be in the black to deal to the green," T Hamilton

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This is what we believe in and we wanted to work with the Bay of Plenty Regional Council, so any submissions we have will always head with that. There is no way we are going to fight them. In 2002 I was Provincial President in Federated Farmers, and one thing I learned is that change happens, and change is going to come at you. It is what you make of that change, how you can get something out of that change, or it will run you over.

We believe if we are part of the problem we need to be part of the solution. We also believe that if farmers are fully involved in the process, they will take ownership of the solution. That is the big one. If you take us through and include us in how you arrived at that solution, you set the scientists in front of us, do the experiments; get the farmers to put the phosphorus socks in the streams, get the farmers to understand how it all works, then they will take ownership of it all. They will understand. It is their community and they want to stay there.

There were huge challenges put before us. Bill Bayfield, Chief Executive of the Bay of Plenty Regional Council before Mary Anne MacLeod, asked us to take control of our destiny. As a Deeded Lake, Lake Okaro had gone through an action plan process, which was advertised and everything else. But no one in that catchment submitted to that process and yet there were 13 submissions from outside submitters, everybody else telling those people in that catchment what to do. Bill Bayfield said get into making submissions and be involved.

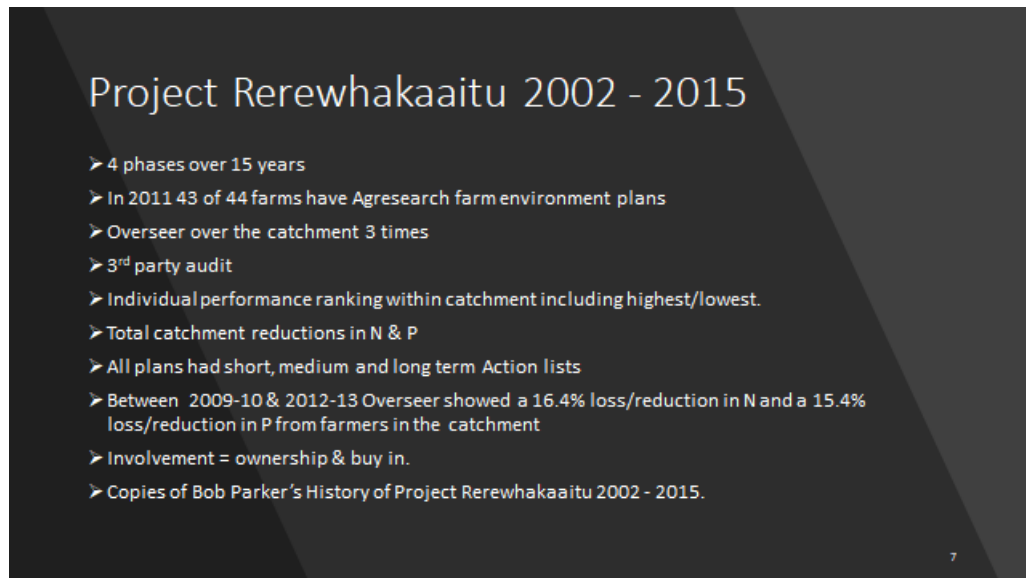
Warwick Murray asked us to take ownership of the project too. This was just after we had changed from dairying to beef, about 2014 and 2015. He wanted us to contribute to the action on the ground, which we were doing anyway. We wondered what Warwick was on about but, hey, that is okay.

Warwick was Chris Ingle's predecessor as was Paul Dell, so we have been through 3 of these guys. Warwick, I knew quite well because I spent 3 years with him on the Land Use Futures Board in Rotorua, which was good. We understood where he was coming from. We took ownership of the project by making it into an incorporated society and that moved us into understanding 'we were it'.

Mike Barton of Taupo Beef said to ensure that all farmers understood the science so that they could understand the solution. That is a big thing.

Doug Leeder, Chair of the Bay of Plenty Regional Council, said hunt as a pack. Doug goes through a lot with us about where we are heading, where we need to understand the rules and everything else that comes at us.

Trevor Hamilton, a farmer, said we have to be in the black to deal to the green. That was obvious.



Project Rerewhakaaitu, 2002 – 2015 had 4 phases. An important thing to look at is the 16.4% reduction in nitrogen and 15.4% reduction in phosphorus from the farmers in the catchment between 2009 and 2013. That is for the Council really, but it was good for the farmers to know. We get ranked and we have a third-party audit. Another big thing was that all plans had short, medium and long-term action lists. The farmers got a plan and understood what nitrogen and phosphorus is about. They worked to their plans, got involved and took ownership.

At the moment on our committee we have 15 members, both men and women, 2 from the Bay of Plenty Regional Council, 1 from Dairy NZ, 1 from Beef+Lamb NZ and Simon Park from Land Connect, who is implementing the land environment plans. It is quite a big meeting and easy to operate. It is my job to make sure they are up to date. It is very positive, they discuss and decide, constantly looking for solutions. There is an unwritten

policy of no secrets and we will get on to that later on. That has to be there. There is a strong relationship theme all the way through.

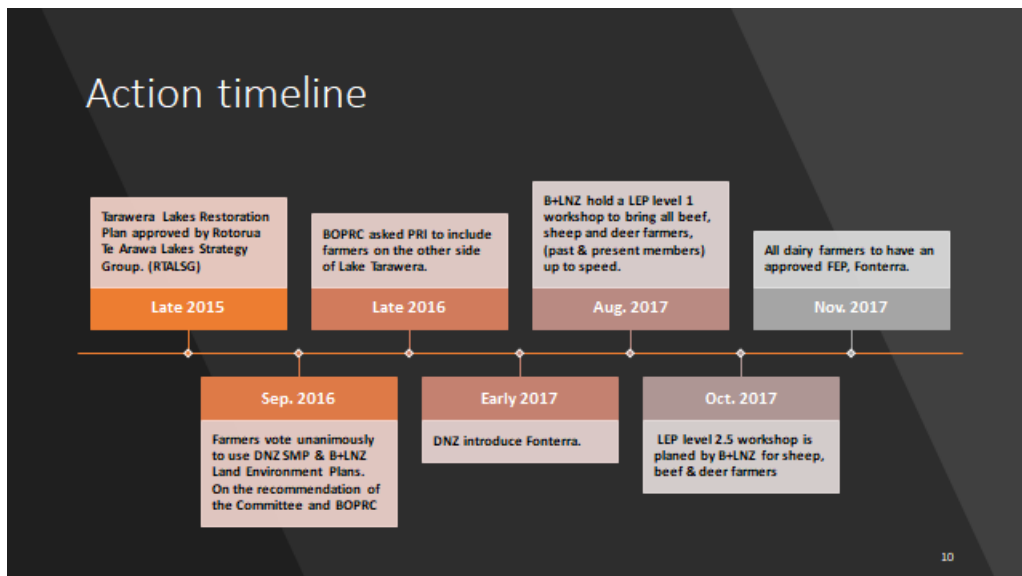
We have accountability being an incorporated society. You do not want to be on the Action and Unfinished Business List. I am usually on that and others are too, but Professor Hamilton got off that the other night with a presentation to the community.

Transparency and ownership is a given. We have 75% paid up members and everybody gets a newsletter. This tells us how many people are really in the game. At present 86% of farmers have farm environment plans either with AgResearch or Beef+Lamb NZ. We do meet the action plans at the moment, but we are going beyond that.

There are now new farm environment plans. We have 50 farmers in the catchments, 28 are dairy farmers, 22 are sheep, beef and deer farmers. Fonterra will do the action plans on all the dairy farms at their cost to the standards of the Regional Council. That was a big windfall and good for everybody. We look for nitrogen, phosphorus, E.coli, silt and bio-diversity. Phosphorus is the target problem, and as David Hamilton has told us time and time again, if P is the target, forestry is not the answer.

This plan recognises past improvements which came from the previous plans funded by farmers. We have not got handouts. I is our own money back there.

The data from Overseer is called amalgamated data which models the catchment and comes from the nutrient budget, part of the farm environment plan in Action 6. Once these plans are in place we will start discussing Action 5.



We have an action timeline. We tried earlier to get where we are now, but we slipped up. PC10 dragged us back down in there, but it allowed DairyNZ to bring Fonterra in. We were ready to do the DairyNZ 'sustainable milk platform' plan. When DairyNZ found out that Fonterra was trialling a farm environment plan, we managed to get them to fit their trial in this area. If it is successful here, there is a good chance that it may roll out even further. That is their news to break, not ours, so that is a win.

Summary of actions				
All actions included in the document including expected reductions and estimated costs are summarised in Table 5.				
Table 5 Summary of all actions				
Actions to reduce nutrients				
Action	Nitrogen reduction kg/year	Phosphorus reduction kg/year	Cost	Cost per kgN and kgP
Action 1 – Reticulate houses in the Lake Tarawera urban community and upgrade conventional septic tanks outside the future reticulation zone.	2,829	283	\$12,400,000 (+GST)	\$43,816 /kgP \$4,383 /kgN
Action 3 – Control nitrogen fixing pest plants in the Lake Tarawera Catchment.	230	n/a	\$181,000	\$700 /kgN
Actions with no reductions				
Action	Outcome		Cost	
Action 2 – All agricultural properties within the Lake Tarawera Inner Catchment to have environmental management plans.	Voluntary reductions in phosphorus from agricultural land in the inner catchment.		\$90,000 (Includes cost of consultant only. Does not include cost of any nutrient reduction actions)	
Action 4 – All agricultural properties within the Lake Tarawera Outer Catchment to have environmental management plans by 1 December 2020.	Voluntary reductions in phosphorus from agricultural land in the outer catchment.		\$120,000 (Includes cost of consultant only. Does not include cost of any nutrient reduction actions)	
Action 5 – Develop a rule to limit land-use changes that increase nutrients in the Tarawera System.	Cap on total nutrients in the catchment will safeguard the lake from increased nutrient loading.		Costs met by other Council work streams or projects.	
Action 6 – Build a model of the Lake Tarawera groundwater system.	Better understanding of the land-uses that contribute to water quality in Lake Tarawera.		Costs met by other Council work streams or projects.	
Action 7 – Carry out a Cultural Health Assessment of the Lake Tarawera Catchment.	Better understanding of the interrelationship between lake water quality and tangata whenua values.		\$50,000 (Includes cost of consultant only. Does not include cost of any nutrient reduction actions)	
Action 8 – Investigate geothermal inputs into Lake Tarawera.	Better understanding of the geothermal inputs into Lake Tarawera.		Costs met by other Council work streams or projects.	
Action 9 – Summarise science around minor nutrient sources.	Consolidated science around minor sources of nutrients in Lake Tarawera.		\$10,000	
Action 10 – Keep community informed (in Plain English) of science updates and reports when available.	Well informed and engaged community.		No cost	

We had a Summary of Actions and a Land Use Capability Workshop as well to understand land use classification. If you are into that, it is really good, and it was where we saw two regional councils work together on the day.

Chris Ingle talked about the action plan. Action 1 of reticulating houses is in place. While I have sat on the Tarawera Sewerage Steering Committee, that figure has gone to about \$18M.

Action 2 is in place with funding sought.

Action 3 has been done. Andy, tell me if I am wrong, as I understand the nitrogen fixing plants have been taken out.

Actions 2 and 4, which are plans on the inner and outer catchments, are in place and in process. There will be savings because Fonterra and Beef+Lamb will be picking up a fair bit of the bill plus everything else.

Action 5 - we have talked to Rebecca Burton. The outcome in Action 5 is a cap on total nutrients. I want to know that the cap is on my head, not on my shoulder nor on my waist, otherwise we will have a different discussion. A cap is a cap otherwise do not call it a cap. Then there is protection, if there is any change in land use that could come in and erode our work. We need to protect the work that we have done over the last 15 years. We do not want someone to upset the model. It threatens the science, it threatens the lake, it threatens everything. So, Action 5 will take place pretty soon.

Action 6 will work because it gets the data out of Actions 2 and 4 and will be under way as well.

Action 7 - I understand from Andy that a cultural assessment will take place.

Action 8 is a biggie and where Paul White will see out his days on geothermal investigations on that job.

Action 9 summarises the science and the minor nutrient sources at a cost of \$10,000.

Action 10 is keeping the community informed and at no cost. Some people say they know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. But if you get that wrong this all falls over and is so important. It is the only thing that is tripping us up at the moment but it will take place.

What does the future bring? Agriculture will continue to be processed by regional councils throughout New Zealand and give effect to the National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management. That is going to happen, no matter what, right throughout the country. Regional councils will process district councils to meet the said Policy Statement. That will happen, and they will go through denial, anger and frustration.

Regional councils will have to work with forestry owners to address the issue of logging and Class 6 land and other sensitive areas. I could take you for a drive to show land that does not look good. If I cannot crop Class 6 land, why would I be allowed to log it? It is one thing to plant trees; it is another thing to take them away. Forestry should work with agriculture, not oppose it, and land use should be complimentary, not competitive. New Zealand Inc. should consider land use capability, understand its capability classification and add a science component to fully utilise New Zealand's natural resources. Not all land is suitable for farming.

If we could throw everything up in the air and let it settle back down in its right place it would be good. To get them to move from one land use to another involves money. We are driven by nothing else. As I said, you have got to be in the black to get in the green.

Surveillance drones will be as common as electric cars. Chris Ingle tells his staff there had better not be a surveillance drone operating anywhere near here. If I had got wind of it the next thing it would be on the front page of the paper that we shot one down. But to be honest and fair, it is our money that is spent to survey what we are doing. Aeroplanes and helicopters are great, but drones are wonderful. You could come into the Rerewhakaaitu catchment, set up a programme on your laptop, sit back and let one go and it would check out all the ponds and everything else needed from the air. That would be wonderful.

Wind turbines are suitable at Kaharoa which is not the only place, but this is the way we are heading. Dams are yesterday's dinosaurs. That will be a discussion in the future as to how effective the hydro dams are, we will see more wind turbines around, in my opinion. I am allowed my own opinion even though I sit on all those boards and committees.

More science is needed around mitigation and less around litigation; because that is the way it happens at the moment. People look for blame and then it ends up in a fight and there is a lawyer involved. I would like to see more science because I constantly get calls from farmers looking for knowledge and scientists. Do not underestimate the influence scientists and farmers can have belly to belly in the field. We have had Professor Hamilton out several times and he was out there again the other night with 25 in the room. One farmer with 10 farms, not all in our catchment and some in the South Island, came up to me after the meeting and said that that meeting was the best presentation he had had. It is the ability to sit down with scientists, such as David, one to one with the farmer and a laptop and talk things through in a non-threatening way. At the end of the day if they can change something on their land, and it does not cost a lot of money and gets the desired

result, isn't that what we want? Go the other way with a hidden agenda, it just does not work.

Farmers have a huge bullshit detector. They can detect it straight away. I sat there the other night and I can tell by the body language. If they lean forward on their knees and put their heads down, it goes over the top and they do not want to listen. If they sit back, they are taking it in, and that is how it should be.

Hey, thanks very much.