

Notes for Waikato Proposed Plan Hearings Commissioners 8th October 2019

Hearing 1 – Issues – Statement for Middlemiss Farm Holdings Ltd

Webber Family History and Ecological Enhancement Subdivision

The Webber Family farm operated by us, Ross and Eleanore Webber, has been in the family for over 60 years. Situated within 2klm of the Kaipara Harbour and 1hour from Auckland City, the farm originally was around 357ha farming Sheep, Deer, Goats and Beef. In 1993 we purchased ½ the farm from Ross's parents, then in 1982 purchased the remainder shares and now retain 195ha.

The farm today has established itself with a mixture of pasture, forestry, covenanted bush and wetland. Currently grazing 150 Angus cows, with calves afoot, 60 Rising 1 heifers and steers along with our 5 Angus breeding Bulls. Our plan is to keep 20-25 heifers as replacements for the breeding herd. Over the last three years this has proven to be successful and we get a lot of satisfaction from breeding our own stock. We also retain around 20-30 steers to two-year olds for fattening depending on the season, selling remaining weaners at Wellsford weaner fair.

Our forestry block of 23 years is around 9ha will be ready for felling in 2025, and we have felled around 8ha over the last 12 months. Some earlier mistakes were made, particularly one block where pines were planted in riparian margins, this has now been felled and replanted 3ha in pines, and the remaining 2ha of wetter areas in natives. This will give the land stability and easy access to harvest pines in the future. Our policy now is to fell our pines where harvesting is not easy, and replant into natives, and this way the more vulnerable land will not be disturbed by loggers in the future.

In the early 2000's under Rodney District Council Plan we were able to covenant our bush/wetland areas and obtain six titles. To obtain these titles a minimum of 5,000 sqm of wetland was required/lot and our remnant bush and Raupo wetland areas were the first to be surveyed and fenced. By doing this we were able to obtain 6 freehold titles, 5 of which are sold and now have families enjoying a wonderful lifestyle environment.

The land subdivided and sold off as bare land blocks, were not high productive areas of the farm, and being on Webber Road - roading and power to these blocks was an easy task. From the income received by selling these lifestyle blocks we purchased the neighbouring 35 ha and allowed us to fence further bush areas to covenant under QEII. We may have lost 10ha but gained 35ha more productive land and created bush covenants.

Planning subdivisions is very important, and we had a vision to see families enjoying a lifestyle, but not disrupt our farming operation. By planning and good advice (including from Cato Bolam), we have achieved a perfect farm/lifestyle environment. The enhancement of planting into our bush blocks has encourage bird life, seed dispersal and the obvious – provided protection of our water ways to the Kaipara Harbour. There are major costs involved in a protection/enhancement subdivision including Council fees,

surveying, roading, electricity, fencing costs and more. This subdivision has been a key part of our farming operation still being sustainable, also giving us financial stability, and funds to continue enhancing our farm environment, by fencing the all-important bush and water way areas.

In the change from then Rodney District Council to Auckland Council Super City in 2010 landowners were encouraged to still covenant bush/wetlands and apply for a “transferrable title”. This meant that land could be fenced, planted and retained, then the transferrable title from General Rural could be obtained and then sold to Countryside Living for further subdivision. This in theory was an excellent programme to allow land to be held with the farm area, but a freehold title to be sold without any disturbance to the farming activities and the land, thus giving farm owners an income without losing land. For the last 3 years we have been fencing and planting our areas to seek 3 transferrable title. With continual updates from our surveyor this frustrating process has been held up yet again with Auckland Council in the Environment court over ongoing issues (*Cabra* cases).

Moving on into 2019 our program for the planting continues. Fencing off 2.1ha of waterway buffer zone protection has just been completed. These run into our Mairatahi catchment area that flow to the Kaipara Harbour. Currently we are planting 3,000 trees consisting of flax, Manuka, Karamu, Te Kekou and more.

The Billion Trees program is another area we are looking to obtain trees, and it is proving to be quite a lengthy process but can be achieved with the right criteria.

We are registered through MPI under the Emission Trading scheme for our pine blocks being approximately 20ha of post 1989 and with further native plantings in place we are achieving some goals for further Carbon Credits.

We feel privileged to have recently won Regional Supreme Award, to represent South Kaipara Head, and New Zealand farmers in general. This award has brought home to us how the fruits of our labour and achievements over the last 40 years. Without the opportunity to undertake an ecological enhancement subdivision we would not have been able to protect and restore as much land as we have. We are proud to have now have 35ha covenanted QEII bush, 20ha restored and retired of the most sensitive, and ecologically important, land and waterways on our property.

Moving forward we will maintain a holistic focus on our three key objectives - environment /waterways, wetland bush, and pasture grazing. We have been given such a wonderful opportunity to be guardians of New Zealand – Aotearoa.

As a family we all share a love for South Head’s beautiful environment and a commitment to achieving a sustainable future for the land. Life is so short that we feel this is our chance to make a lasting difference to this property.

MIDDLEMISS SUBMISSIONS

Issues Hearing - 8th October 2019

Ecological Enhancement Subdivision Mapping Examples

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Table 2. Summary of total land area for Threatened Environment Categories within the Waikato District.

Category	Category Criteria	Percentage of land in Waikato District	Area (ha) of land in Waikato District
1	<10% indigenous cover remaining	44.10%	191,448
2	10–20% indigenous cover remaining	25.55%	110,928
3	20–30% indigenous cover remaining	8.15%	35,387
4	>30% indigenous cover remaining and <10% legally protected	0.02%	107
5	>30% indigenous cover remaining and 10–20% legally protected	0.17%	717
6	>30% indigenous cover remaining and >20% legally protected	22.01%	95,577

Table 3. Matrix of Significant natural areas in each LENZ TEC category (in hectares) in the Waikato District for each SNA ranking score. Undetermined LENZ sites are located primarily along the Waikato River excluding many riparian SNA.

SNA Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	Undetermined	Total
International	2,735	3,510	4				0	6,250
National	1,555	2,121	3,003	7	325	24,148	92	31,253
Regional	2,588	3,837	1,093		53	9,717	246	17,534
Local	3,114	3,056	1,705	11	10	6,385	28	14,309
Likely	345	406	276		0	727		1,755
Indeterminate	570	724	577		1	1,195	4	3,071
Not Significant	398	404	233		5	767	5	1,812
TOTAL	11,306	14,059	6,892	18	394	42,941	374	75,984

5.2 At Risk, Threatened and Notable Species and Other Significant Features

A total of 105 nationally threatened and at risk species (53 flora species and 52 fauna species), as defined by the Department of Conservation, have been recorded as being present within the Waikato District defined by the Department of Conservation (e.g. Robertson *et al.*, 2017; Hitchmough *et al.*, 2016; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2012; de Lange *et al.*, 2013; Goodman *et al.*, 2014; Grainger *et al.*, 2014) as recorded in the BioWeb spatial dataset (administered by DOC), BIMS spatial dataset, and NZFFDB (administered by NIWA), and from records held by Kessels Ecology. These threatened species are listed in Table 4 to Table 9. Threat classification was determined using the New Zealand Threat Classification System manual (Townsend *et al.*, 2008) depicted in Figure 4.

The threat status of species is important and has had a significant bearing on the SNA assessment. The most up-to-date threat status rankings were used for this assessment (e.g. Robertson *et al.*, 2017; Hitchmough *et al.*, 2016; O'Donnell *et al.*, 2012; de Lange *et al.*, 2013; Goodman *et al.*, 2014;