

15 December 2023

To: Great Wellington Regional Council  
Sent via email to [regionalplan@gw.govt.nz](mailto:regionalplan@gw.govt.nz)

From: **John Western**  
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**Submission on Greater Wellington Regional Council's Proposed Plan Change 1 to the Natural Resources Plan.**

1. I am a whitewater kayaker / and paddle boarder in the Wellington region.
2. My primary interest in the whitua is whitewater kayaking on rivers. However, I also utilise parts of the coast for kayaking and paddle boarding– which are obvious 'receiving environments' for water from upstream in the catchment.
3. The water bodies and coastal environments I use most often for kayaking in the Whaitua are
  - i. **Te Awakairangi / the Hutt River**, particularly:
    - a) The section from Kaitoke Regional Park (Rivendell) to Twin Lakes Rd.
    - b) The section from the confluence of the Akatarawa and Hutt Rivers to Māoribank Park (particularly the section of river next to the Hutt Valley Canoe Club clubrooms at Hoggard Park)
  - ii. The **Whakatikei River**
  - iii. **Te Whanganui a Tara / Wellington Harbour**, particularly:
    - a) **Oriental Bay**
    - b) **Evans Bay**
    - c) **Seatoun**
  - iv. **Lyll Bay**
4. Primarily I value the water quality values of these areas for **contact recreation** (and **ecosystem health** by association – as healthy ecosystems support better water quality for contact, such as by limiting algal growth). I also note a huge part of the value of the rivers in the above list for me is their **natural form and character**. It is the natural form and character that create the rapids and other features of these sections of river that make them so valuable for kayaking and paddle boarding.

5. Te Awakairangi / the Hutt Gorge in particular is an **outstanding** run for whitewater kayaking, which traverses what we would consider an **outstanding landscape** with **outstanding amenity values**. It is regularly paddleable through winter and offers grade 3-5 kayaking at varying flows that is comparable with some of the best runs in Aotearoa. **I would like to see the outstanding value of this section of river recognised in the plan.**
6. Generally, the Hutt Gorge is paddleable at flows above 6-8 m<sup>3</sup>/s on the Kaitoke gauge. The lower section (confluence of the Akatarawa down) is best at about 15-25 m<sup>3</sup>/s on the Birchville gauge. Paddling on the rapid at Hoggard Park can generally be done at any flow. The Akatarawa River is paddleable when there has been a lot of rain, as is the Whakatikei.
7. The natural and wildlife values of these areas are also important to me. I regularly participate in trips with local canoe clubs, one of which runs a trap line along the Hutt Gorge to trap pests and protect native birds.

#### **Issues I see in the whitua**

8. I regularly paddle the Hutt river when flows increase and notice considerable amounts of **sediment**. This has obvious implications for the amenity value of the river when I paddle it – making is less desirable to be ‘in’ the water as well as making it more difficult to see people through the water should any paddlers ever be in a situation where they are required to rescue someone from under the water. There are also presumably higher **e. coli and pathogen** loads in this water.
9. Further downstream, I often notice algae and toxic algae in summer when flows are low. Again, not only does this create an issue for **recreation** and **amenity** values, but also for **human health** and **contact** with the water.
10. In some parts of Te Awakairangi, I am aware there are antiquated pieces of river ‘engineering’ (such as railway iron). This degrades the quality of the river in this section and presents a hazard for paddlers. I note willows can also present a hazard to kayakers, as can forestry slash and logs which can end up in rivers and cause fatalities.

#### **My general position on the plan change**

11. I support Proposed Plan Change 1 and the initiatives GWRC is trying to introduce to improve water quality in the catchment. I would like to see these carried through to the operative plan, particularly where they protect and restore **ecosystem health, contact recreation values, natural form and character, and amenity**.

12. I understand these are a priority under Te Mana o te Wai. I support the Te Mana o te Wai concept and the hierarchy of obligations and want to see ecosystem health and contact recreation prioritised.
13. Key issues for me are **water quality (particularly e. coli, sediment, algal growth/periphyton, and ecosystem health); amenity; contact recreation; and natural form and character.**
14. I support the targets in the water quality target tables. I want to see as much done as possible through environmental limits to achieve these targets.
15. I would like to see **the outstanding kayaking / packrafting / rafting / paddle boarding values** in the Whaitua recognised in the plan, particularly for the Hutt Gorge (which has outstanding kayaking, amenity, and landscape values).
16. I would like to see GWRC do more to monitor and preserve **natural character**, and to strengthen objectives, policies, and rules which allow the river to function more naturally, particularly in its reaches influenced by flood protection. I would like to see targets for natural character that are similar to the sorts of targets we set for water quality. And I would like to see objectives and policies that support these.
17. I would like to see more done to enhance water quality in the coastal environment, so I can use these 'flat water' environments for learning and training without worrying about compromising my health if I come into contact with the water. I would like to see coastal water quality indicators/targets retained.

**SUBMISSION ENDS**