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HHWET/RDRML hearing evidence overview

1. Improving the ecosystem health of Hekeao Hinds waterways requires an integrated, catchment scale solution to a multi-faceted challenge.
2. In addition to on-farm improvements, catchment scale enhancements are required to address historical groundwater nutrients, rebalance water systems while the time lagged improvements in on farm practices work through the systems, and assist ecosystems to address future climate stress.
3. This approach is consistent with the Canterbury Water Management Strategy (CWMS):
 - 3.1. Catchment interventions were subject to detailed consideration through the CMWS Assessment and Evaluations (Environmental Infrastructure) workstream from 2010-22.
 - 3.2. MAR was identified as a potential catchment scale enhancement in the CWMS, and it was assessed positively against CWMS targets and priorities.
 - 3.3. Through this workstream, MAR approaches (with NRR and TSA) were then developed and later expanded on by the Selwyn and Ashburton Zone Committees through their own community engagement processes. In the Hekeao Hinds area, MAR and TSA were an express part of the Zone Committee 'Solutions package' that ultimately informed the development of the Plan Change 2 provisions.
4. The Canterbury Land and Water Plan (LWRP) has been the subject of four plan changes (Plan Changes 1, 2, 3 and 7) where MAR, TSA and other augmentation regimes have been the subject of careful and detailed consideration. The LWRP now has specific provisions that contemplate MAR, TSA and augmentation for environmental purposes.

5. Trialling of pilot scale MAR, NRR and TSA activities has been undertaken and successfully concluded in Selwyn Waihora and Hekeao Hinds Plains. Environment Canterbury have since gained consents and operationalised a catchment scale NRR project and a tributary scale TSA project in Selwyn Waihora.
6. HHWET's existing and proposed (through the current HHWET/RDRML resource consenting process) MAR/NRR activities are in particular supported by the specific LWRP provisions that were introduced through:
 - 6.1. Plan Change 2 (PC2) that specifically addresses the Hekeao Hinds area. Under the PC2 provisions (now Section 13 of the LWRP), the LWRP does not contemplate a 2035 scenario where nutrient loss reduction targets have been reached but MAR and associated catchment scale enhancements have not occurred.
 - 6.2. Plan Change 7 (PC7), in relation to which HHWET worked with Environment Canterbury on the further MAR provisions that were introduced through this plan change. These rules were specifically designed to enable supplementary use of water currently taken and used for other activities (as this was HHWET's situation and was likely to be the situation faced by other applications).
7. Further, HHWET are reducing the volume of Rangitata River water required for MAR/NRR by trialling complementary enhancement activities (TSA, constructed wetlands and bioreactors).
8. HHWET have respected water allocation limits by only seeking supplementary /subservient use of water, even where minimum flow exemptions have been identified. HHWET have also supported efforts to reduce (and in the case of the Hekeao Hinds River, eliminate) takes from overallocated water bodies. Legal advice has confirmed the proposed takes are consistent with the Rakaia and Rangitata River Water Conservation Orders.
9. HHWET are leading and supporting on-going scientific investigations to ensure there is a strong evidence basis for all decisions.
10. Hekeao Hinds Plains landowners are funding HHWET through targeted rates at the same time as their on-farm improvements. They are therefore funding historical remediation requirements, PC2 on-farm improvements and future resilience at the same time. The landowners also recreate in and around local waterways and use local groundwater for domestic purposes. They therefore have multiple incentives to reduce their environmental footprints.
11. HHWET see the current applications as an important part of delivering ecosystem health and improving drinking water quality in the Hekeao Hinds area. Without such interventions, the achievement of the outcomes desired by the community (both under the LWRP and wider policy directions such as that provided by the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020) will be much more challenging, and unlikely to occur in the timeframes contemplated.