Summary of notes from Ruamāhanga Whaitua Committee water allocation community meetings February 2018

Summarises and roughly groups responses. Places responses against most relevant question.

Question 1. Technical questions/GWRC questions

- How are the values of community balanced when making decisions?
- What modelling has been done on climate change? Restrictions earlier this year than previously
- Lack of economic data, particularly for individuals
- What is the impact on wellbeing?
- Don't understand science and analysis of different options for fish
- More information availability.
- Why focus on torrent fish? Alternatives of managing flow for torrent fish? How many torrent fish are there?
- How much weighting is given to climate change?
- Happy with restriction on shallow gravel takes, question evidence associated with deep bores
- Are low flows caused by abstraction? Lower flows across the whole catchment, even above abstraction
- Are other water users affected (e.g. commercial)?
- What is the gain to the flow of ceasing take, but the river is still dropping?
- Are we monitoring in the right places? Is it just flow to be measured?
- What if cease takes are implemented and river still drops?
- Monitoring before implementation
- Where is evidential monitoring from past to substantiate proposed regulation?
- What's different from 30 years ago re flows and fish life?
- How can Whaitua ensure that regulations aren't implemented immediately e.g. Doc, F&G
- Connectivity and measurability of Category A. What impacts on the river?
- Are low flows regularly affecting the whole of the Wairarapa?
- Option to increase minimum flow and keep 50%
- Benefit of river management e.g. riparian margins
- Evidence to show what a difference raised levels at Waipoua would do. How many consents
- How much time will we have to react?
- What time do we have to make decisions?
- Invested hundreds and thousands of dollars in infrastructure
- Who represents recreation on the Committee? Want the political members here to listen
- Letters were understood
- How will RWC communicate with those most affected?

Question 2. What were you reactions to the proposals?

- Scared to open the letter, extreme concern.
- Costs would be shocking, expensive, unaffordable, significant economic impact.
- Could mean loss of dairy farming. Won't be dairy farming in 100 years
- Not overly surprised
- Want to see more water in the river but there are other options
- Proposals put existing investment at risk, huge economic impacts on farms
- Can handle 50% restriction – 100% cease = capital value loss.

- Examples of on-farm impacts: could lead to 30-50% loss of production. In droughts can't feed even half stock numbers without irrigation. Loss of staff, $200-300k reductions
- Ability to farm and revenue is directly affected. Harms future opportunities, creates uncertainty and turns off investment. Lose support of banks.
- Flow on reductions in on-farm employment, local and regional economy
- Impacts on family wellbeing and pride, staff and mental health
- Minimum 20-30 years needed to realise value of existing investment
- Reduction in capital value of farm
- Dry land farmers use irrigation to have reliable feed for stock, reducing stress. Irrigation gives resilience
- Reduces scale of operations and food production, lose certainty of being able to feed animals, more PKE. One estimation = $40-50K of supplementary feed, $150k in 1 in 10yr drought
- Impact on losing water in January is an issue as is a critical month, particularly for cropping
- Root stock impacted as restrictions affect next year's growth e.g. olives
- Water quality is a whole community matter. Farmers feel somewhat targeted. What are the impacts on commercial users? Don't like quality/quantity split conversation
- Sports complex impacted, affects community
- Schools on bores potentially affected
- Wish to work sustainably so our children can farm
- Dry and temperature increasingly an issue, means water is needed more
- What are impacts on MDC? Could include on Queen Elizabeth Park, impacts community
- What about Greytown sewage?
- Why not focus on MDC leakage over 5 years and other urban issues? Want to see townies pay for change. If irrigators have to spend $100K so should councils. Urban still don't feel impact of what could happen; nothing is as demotivating as not seeing urban doing their bit. Charge urban users for use above certain use
- What are the impacts of other activities on fish? E.g. MDC ponds?
- Do we need more water in river to dilute town discharges? Can smell MDC WWTP at high flows
- Why aren't permitted activities controlled more?
- Climate change will further affect conditions
- How much benefit to the environment is there? Want to see more science to support decision and better economic information. Economics should consider whole of economy impacts. Cannot see how social impact has been considered
- Need to understand and monitor aquifers better (particularly deeper water). Make sure what we do, makes a difference, want to see a bigger picture
- Quick changes in policy have proved bad elsewhere (Horizons, Ruataniwha) and are hard to unwind
- Why 90%, why not 70% with other strategies? E.g. storage, nutrients, shading, on-farm/urban improvements. Drainage of catchment doesn't help, rivers designed to move water away quickly
- We're fighting the organisation we pay rates to
- Economics of changes to nutrient management should be considered together with change in reliability
- Fairness – be equitable across the Wairarapa, not just those on vulnerable aquifers
- Is using information on fish appropriate? National information not catchment based
- What would the effect of putting Category A back in the river be on flow?

- Community problems need to find community solutions

Question 3. What would it take for you to be able to transition to a new regime?

- Can't really transition; there is no acceptable timeframe; will take years to transition; time of implementation needs to provide enough time to adapt
- Storage necessary, but can be very expensive and/or uneconomic
- What alternatives for water, particularly Jan/Feb? What's best value? Multiple approaches needed, no one silver bullet, needs to be a full package. Options: on farm storage, Wairarapa Water, use of MDC wastewater, change in production/alternative land uses, storage of water in soils, water harvesting, farm planning, slow down water to use it later
- Integrate supply and use with lots of separate bodies across catchment
- Seek high value production – value for everyone
- How could we keep water in the system? (MAR, natural recharge, less straightening of rivers)
- Rivers have lost pools, been straightened etc through flood protection practices. Are there opportunities to slow water when rivers are in flood? E.g. buffer systems, deeper pools
- Water race management consistency between GWRC and RWC
- GWRC structural change
- Control on permitted activity takes to contribute, including with increasing subdivision/development. Should link to review of district plan, require tanks
- High water flow ok, but not at the cost of irrigation. Consider storage (irrigation, AR, river augmentation), nutrient management and shading
- Water is no good if it is not reliable
- Deficit irrigation needs reliability whereas inefficient (over saturation) irrigation can cope with less reliability
- Will make the changes, but will not be the same i.e. less water, less labour, less income, less spend
- New takes – GW big roll out of new takes – big impact on existing users
- Gene splicing technology- drought resistant species, but will take time to develop
- With dry conditions predicted, why aren't we doing something proactive
- Incentives for good environmental behaviour, not just focus on non-compliance
- Water transfer, shared consents
- Need time and information so farmers can challenge WIP with own experts etc
- Encourage long term decision making, time to figure out how to adjust
- Changes to Category A will have most impact, including as gains not able to be made through improved efficiency as farmers already doing these improvements. Conversely: 10-15% efficiency can be gained from increasing sophistication of irrigation
- Irrigating at night an option but needs 1 day storage
- Individual storage will be more expensive than one big scheme
- Stepping stones required to move towards more efficient systems
- Changing land use requires greater water security
- Financial support for farm storage
- Water harvesting from Ruamāhanga river
- Consents not used go back into the water pot
- Water sharing between users in same area

Question 4-7. What would happened if the proposed changes were introduced in … ?

When?	What happens?
Now	RC nursery closes Farms sell up now/ will put us off the land Loss of productive land Increase in lifestyle blocks Local economy impacted – rural community closes down, flow on to towns Immediate income drop e.g. next year's crops At this stage there is no technology available that would help – but there maybe in the future Immediate effect if put in place now Too quick – massive kneejerk reaction
In 5yrs	Reduces productivity, slightly less than immediately but similar Increase in lifestyle blocks Farms selling up Too short/no margins for innovation On site storage could start but unlikely people have ability to invest Could shut down farms – many dairy farms already only at break even Extra costs (20%?) to grow crops to get through Jan-Feb Make transitions easier by reducing consent costs (e.g. dams) or rates relief Could start system change
In 10yrs	This option is more realistic, nothing before this Return from innovative changes kicking in Some will sell, recover capital costs Allows business decisions and planning for change e.g. implementing storage Water storage will be necessary – property or community scale Age of current farmers would require exit strategy 10-20 years gives time to react 10year consents - staged
In 20yrs	Similar to 10yr Will protect existing investment (different between systems) Will need to find an income, may be non-farming Are alternatives constrained as no new water? Would be looking for big storage A proper time horizon and staged approach will better allow for adaptation The ability to plan ahead is essential Certainty of water, certainty for longer term, 20 years or more enables investment for change

- Long time frames – e.g. minimum 35 years
- Doing more with less water

- Can't go back – no economies of scale in past/pre irrigation models
- Storage on farm is expensive/complex
- What are the economics of on farm storage vs regional storage
- Need to find whole community not just farm economy solutions
- Align solutions with Wairarapa economic development
- Enabling policy and alternatives to allow change
- River management to assist reliability
- We have the water, the time taken to make it reliable
- Can cope better with restrictions until Feb – not at the end of the year (higher demands)
- Every situation different economic effect
- Timeframe long enough to ensure in-depth study in place to justify changes
- Status quo – what does it look like now, in 5yrs, in 10 yrs
- Partly irrigated properties will feel it the most
- Close down eater races – water temperatures so high – campylobacter and salmonella in calves

Question 5 – What are the main considerations the Committee should keep front of mind when confirming timeframes for a new water use regime?

- Farmers are dealing with numerous other things – not just this (e.g. IRD, Worksafe, Fonterra) Cost of compliance
- It takes time to find and implement new solutions
- Not just a problem for the farmer – downstream effects for the shrinking economy
- Economic viability
- Time for effects to take place

General themes/questions

Theme	**Comment**
Clarity around how this option was reached, balancing values	What other options considered? How were values balanced? Perception cultural and fish values highly considered, economic not so much Is 90% protection at MALF necessary for a healthy river? Want to see better economic information Humans more important than fish Want more clarity on how Committee got to where they have
Will ceasing take help the river levels?	
Storage	What is happening? What is risk of no storage
Challenges to Category A designations	What process for dispute? What groundtruthing of the model? Desire for a 'combined' approach, not consent by consent
Change in availability of water during shoulder seasons	Will water be available for storage at other times?
Transition to change required	

Increased storage needed	For hills, community and farms (on flat?) Whaitua Committee should support water storage from winter flows Consider large storage to top up river at low flows
Impacts on local economy and society	Change in cropping and land use Increased subdivision Farmers selling up More forestry?
Flood protection related	Who sets policy for Waipoua river management? Want river managed for economic use and fish, not for flood protection GWRC FP gravel extraction and bed ripping practice lowering levels of water races (2m in 10yrs)