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To: Great Wellington Regional Council
Sent via email to regionalplan@gw.govt.nz

From: **Victoria University Canoe Club**
Jamie Wheeler (President)
jamiewheeler0355@gmail.com
[redacted]

Submission on Greater Wellington Regional Council's Proposed Plan Change 1 to the Natural Resources Plan.

Figure 1: VUCC members kayaking on Te Awakairangi.

Introduction:

1. The Victoria University Canoe Club (VUCC) is a kayak & canoe club based at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, but is open to everyone, students and non-students alike. The club was founded in 1980 and has been introducing people of all ages to kayaking for nearly 40 years. We are primarily a whitewater kayaking club, with Te Awakairangi our local river run and Lyall Bay our local surf spot.

2. VUCC's constitutional aims and objectives are set out below. We have highlighted (in bold) our particular interest in Plan Change 1.

    1. The promotion and encouragement of canoeing and associated activities, including:
        i. White-water canoeing and kayaking;
        ii. Such other aquatic sport or activities for the recreation of its members as the Club may determine, such as sea canoeing, packrafting, rafting etc.
    2. To publish and distribute any document which will enhance the general knowledge of canoeing and its associated activities.
    3. **To maintain an active interest in the preservation and conservation of canoe-able waterways.**
    4. **The promotion of access to waterways and preservation of white-water resources.**
    5. Encourage student participation in whitewater kayaking

3. We wish to speak to our submission.

Our values in the Whaitua

4. Our primary interest in the whaitua is whitewater kayaking. However, we also utilise parts of the coast for surf and sea kayaking – which are obvious 'receiving environments' for water from upstream in the catchment.

5. The water bodies and coastal environments our club and membership 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)
        c) The rivermouth, including paddling up the **Waiwhetu Stream** at times
    ii. The **Whakatikei River**
    iii. **Te Whanganui a Tara / Wellington Harbour**, particularly:
        a) Oriental Bay
        b) Evans Bay
    iv. **Porirua Harbour** and **Titahi Bay**
    v. Lyall Bay

6. Primarily we 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). We also note a huge part of the value of the rivers in the above list for us 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. **Landscape** and **amenity** values are also important.

7. 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. **We would like to see the outstanding value of this section of river recognised in the plan.**

8. Generally, the Hutt Gorge is paddleable at flows above 6-8 m3/s on the Kaitoke gauge. The lower section (confluence of the Akatarawa down) is best at about 15-25 m3/s on the Birchville gauge. Paddling on the rapid at Hoggard Park can generally be done at any flow, and some of our members utilise slalom gates set up over this section of river throughout summer. The Akatarawa River is paddleable when there has been a lot of rain, as is the Whakatikei.

9. The natural and wildlife values of these areas are also important to us. We regularly collaborate on trips (and share some members) with Hutt Valley Canoe Club, who run a trap line along the Hutt Gorge to trap pests and protect native birds. Native birds and wildlife in the coastal environment also provide a significant value for sea kayaking and general time spent training in these places (such as the blue penguins we often see when members paddle at Evans Bay).

Issues we see in the whaitua

10. Our club members regularly paddle the Hutt Gorge whenever flows increase above 6-8 m3/s on the Kaitoke gauge. Our 'put-in' is at the confluence of the Pakuratahi and Hutt Rivers. When the rivers rise, we notice considerable amounts of **sediment** coming from the Pakuratahi River. See Figure 1 below. This has obvious implications for the amenity value of the river when we 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 we even find ourselves in a situation where we are required to rescue someone from under the water. There are also presumably higher **e. coli and pathogen** loads in this water.

Figure 2: Confluence of Pakuratahi (top) and Hutt (bottom) Rivers. Note sediment load from Pakuratahi in particular.

11. Further downstream, we 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.

12. In some parts of Te Awakairangi, such as the reach between the Hutt Gorge 'get out' and the Akatarawa confluence, we have noticed old railway iron and other antiquated river 'engineering'. This degrades the quality of the river in this section and presents a hazard for kayakers.

13. We note willows can also present a hazard to kayakers, as can forestry slash and logs which can end up in rivers and cause fatalities.

Our general position on the plan change

14. VUCC supports Proposed Plan Change 1 and the initiatives GWRC is trying to introduce to improve water quality in the catchment. We 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, landscape, and amenity**.

15. We understand these are a priority under Te Mana o te Wai. We support the Te Mana o te Wai concept and the hierarchy of obligations and want to see ecosystem health and contact recreation prioritisied. We would like to see Te Mana o te Wai (and wai ora) acknowledged throughout the plan change to emphasise its importance and ensure it is acted on.

16. Key issues for us are **water quality (particularly e. coli, sediment, algal growth/periphyton, DIN/DRP, and ecosystem health); amenity; contact recreation; and natural form and character**.

17. We largely support the targets in the water quality target tables. However, we would like to see stronger periphyton targets as we understand 200 mg is too high to protect the values we have in these catchments. We ask the minimum to be 120 mg (e.g., for the Waiwhetu and for the lower mainstem of Te Awa Kairangi). We would like to see maximum DIN targets of < 1.0 mg/L, and ideally targets of around 0.3 mg/L. We understand these values support ecosystem health and Te Mana o te Wai. We want to see as much done as possible through environmental limits to achieve these targets.

18. We would like to see **the outstanding kayaking values** in the Whaitua recognised in the plan, particularly for the Hutt Gorge (which has outstanding kayaking, amenity, and landscape values).

19. We 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. We would like to see targets for natural character that are similar to the sorts of targets we set for water quality. And we would like to see objectives and policies that support these.

20. We would like to see more done to enhance water quality in the coastal environment, so we can continue to use these 'flat water' environments for teaching and training without worrying about compromising our health if we come into contact with the water. We would like to see coastal water quality indicators/targets retained.

SUBMISSION ENDS