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# Submission on Nature Calls Consultation

The ENM membership have expressed frustration and disappointment in the diminished range of options offered at this stage of consultation. In particular, the removal of any option to avoid or reduce discharge into the Manawātū river. Full or partial discharge to land has always been our preferred course of action due to the reduced stress on aquatic ecosystems. The wise utilisation of water resources for appropriate irrigation presents a solution on two fronts. We live in an age of climate disruption, which in Manawātū manifests in increased prolonged dry spells and heavy rain events. Investing now in infrastructure that can cope with these predictable extremes while minimising harm to the river is the responsible course of action.

Furthermore, the estuary at the mouth of the Manawātū river has been appointed RAMSAR status as a wetland of international significance, qualifying under seven of the nine criteria relating to rare and threatened animal and plant species. It is the duty of all people dwelling near the river and tributaries to care for its health, for the sake of preserving and restoring native biodiversity across the catchment.

The primary barrier to this option is the alleged higher cost. Our membership has been provided no evidence that the costings are grounded in real world quotes or in-depth research, and the professed “p50” status of the dollar figures does nothing to increase confidence. For these reasons, the membership feels that the range of options was prematurely constricted and does not offer a meaningful choice to the community.

Of the two options now provided, Environment Network supports "option 2" which includes a second discharge option at Ōpiki, enabling better river health outcomes in times of low rainfall. The point has been raised that the tidal effect on the river does reach Ōpiki, so the timing of discharge must account for the very low level of river flow seen at high tide.

Our members have expressed support for the inclusion of funding for adaptive management; however, questions have been raised of its potential effectiveness at the seemingly low rate of 1 million per year. More clarity is needed on how potential adaptive strategies will be investigated and administered within this funding structure. The list of potential adaptive strategies includes diverting wastewater from the river and using it for irrigation. Our membership feels that the time to make these changes is now, not after a huge investment in the river discharge system has already been made.

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