

**BEFORE THE COMMISSIONERS ON BEHALF OF  
THE OTAGO REGIONAL COUNCIL**

Consent No. RM20.039

**BETWEEN**

**VARIOUS – COLLECTIVELY  
KNOWN AS PIGBURN WATER  
USERS GROUP**

**Applicant**

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**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF RENEE WEIR – HAMILTON RUNS LIMITED**

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**GALLAWAY COOK ALLAN  
LAWYERS  
DUNEDIN**

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**BRIEF OF EVIDENCE OF RENEE WEIR**

Tēnā koutou katoa

Nei rā te mihi maioha ki a koutou

Ko Aoraki te mauka teitei

Ko Kakaunui tōku awa

Ko Takitimu tōku waka

Ko Moeraki tōku marae

Ko Pokiri tōku tipuna

Ko Renee Weir tōku ikoa

No reira tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

**INTRODUCTION**

1. My name is Renee Weir. I am an owner of Hamilton Runs Limited which is one of the applicants in relation to this resource consent hearing. I give this evidence on behalf of Hamilton Runs Limited which is an intergenerational family run sheep and beef operation. Attached with this evidence is a powerpoint presentation which I will refer to throughout this evidence.
2. Currently myself and my husband Gerard, Mother in law Tracey and Father in Law Stu farm the property together. We hope that our children and grandchildren will be able to continue farming this land after us and will be the future Kaitiaki of this land that we are so incredibly lucky to call home.
3. We are raising our children to appreciate what it means to be guardians of the land and to have respect and connection with the environment. As the generations before us have shared this connection with the land with us, we are continuing that narration, sharing this with our children,

spending every opportunity we can to educate them to live harmoniously with nature.<sup>1</sup>

4. We have been farming Hamilton Runs for 25 years, but our family has been farming in the area dating back to 1848. We are active community members contributing when and where we can. We are involved in numerous community groups including the junior rugby club, athletics club, golf club, bridge club, squash club, curling club, garden club, rodeo club, irrigation companies, Upper Taieri Catchment Group, art council, collie club, rural fire brigade, Tiaki Maniototo, RMPP farm discussion group and as a Justice of the Peace.<sup>2</sup>

### **FARM OPERATION**

5. Hamilton Runs Limited owns 4500 ha property within the Pig Burn Catchment. We operate it as a Sheep and Beef operation running up to 700 cattle and 9500 sheep. The property supports 3 generations of our family and we engaged multiple contractors and casual workers to help us as necessary.
6. The majority of the property is dryland with 380ha of the property being irrigated. Water for this irrigation is sourced from the Pig Burn, Cap Burn and Maniototo East Side Irrigation Company. We use water for irrigation, stock and domestic drinking water. The irrigation is used to produce winter crops, supplementary feed and gives us the ability to finish stock. The reality is that without the irrigated land on the property we would be unable to sustain the 3 generations currently supported by the property.
7. We have a mixture of pivot, k-line and flood irrigation currently. We have also established 4 dams as part of our farm development plans to date. Two of those Dams (Middle and Lower) store water from the Pig Burn. This infrastructure has been developed over a number of years and it was not until 2019-2020 that we had all of this online which has affected our water monitoring data.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer Powerpoint Slide 2 and 16-18

<sup>2</sup> Refer Powerpoint slide 5-6

8. In 2015 we constructed our middle dam which holds 25,000m<sup>3</sup> of storage water. This dam is stage 1 in our plan of developing a larger dam below this point enabling storage of 300,000-400,000m<sup>3</sup> of water<sup>3</sup>. In 2015 we also installed a 350m pivot with associated mainlines, Genset and VRI. This cost is over \$265,000 plus labour costs.
9. In 2016/17 we replaced a 6km pipeline carrying irrigation water from the Cap Burn to address the poor state of that conveyance infrastructure. This required materials, helicopter cartage to site, labour, fuel, technical advice and consent fees etc. We have purchased our own bulldozer and digger so that we can construct our own storage following advice from Geologists and Hydrologists as to Dam position and scale.
10. We purchased a 1/3 share with other likeminded farmers in a 'rut buster' to address the issues created by pivot ruts and have completed refencing within our pivot areas to give us greater control and certainty of paddock sizes and the ability to rest the land during our stock rotation. The costs of this phase of work were approximately \$600,000 plus labour.
11. In 2018/19 we installed a second pivot, mainline, electrics, pumps etc. Installation costs included power connections, underground pipework, troughs, fencing etc totalling approximately \$485,000 plus labour.
12. When we factor labour costs into this, we estimate these works have cost a total of \$1.8 Million. We have largely funded this through borrowing and as such are reliant on our ability to generate a good return to pay that borrowing down and secure a sustainable future for our family.
13. Whilst some might say we left our run on these upgrades late, it was because we were not in a position to carry out the upgrades due to financial and human resource constraints until this time. We have carried them out completely in good faith and we genuinely thought we were doing the right thing.

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<sup>3</sup> Refer Powerpoint slide 14

14. We have worked on developing more efficient water use over many years. It has not been easy, and we have progressed as finances and labour resources have allowed. It has also affected water use during the period of development. Effectively we have had areas of the property that we were not irrigating between 2015-2019 as the development was undertaken. The 2019-2020 season was the first season where all the new irrigation infrastructure was online and therefore the data from this season is the best reflection of our needs. The volume of water provided for in the section 42A report is well short of what we require for our new infrastructure. Such a significant reduction in volume would be hugely problematic for us. I understand that the data relied on in the section 42A report is not correct and that our consultants are getting to the bottom of the discrepancy.
15. We have further water storage plans that we would like to be able to complete as discussed in paragraph 8 above.
16. This will allow water to be harnessed from the Pig Burn during periods of high flow and used during periods when the flow in the Pig Burn is low. We have also invested in other environmental improvements on our farm.<sup>4</sup> This has included extensive planting and fencing such as fencing of 4ha surrounding one of our storage dams and planting 3000 plants. We also spent considerable amounts of time following the floods in January of this year rescuing stranded fish and returning them to waterways.

#### **EXPERIENCE WITH PIGBURN**

17. The Pig Burn runs in a roughly northerly direction through our property. We regularly observe the waterway and how it is behaving when we are within the irrigation season.
18. It is also important to note that it can be a volatile waterway. As demonstrated by slides 8-13. You can see it went from quiet creek to raging torrent following 150mm of rain. This flood took out our water intake, pipes, fences, stock and pasture. We are still working on the

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<sup>4</sup> Refer Slide 14-17 of Powerpoint

repairs to the intake infrastructure to get the water running again, hopefully prior to the critical upcoming irrigation season.

### **CONCERNS ABOUT UNCERTAINTY**

19. We are genuinely concerned about the potential implications of short-term consents requested by Aukaha and Fish and Game. Having only recently completed our upgrades our lending rates remain high. Therefore, any reduction in the value of our land can reduce our borrowing capacity due to a reduction in equity. I am aware this is an issue of concern to banks and financiers. Irrigated land in our area currently sells for between \$15,000-20,000/Ha compared to dryland at about \$2,000/ha.
20. It is an unusually challenging time to be a farmer. There is so much regulatory change coming at us that we need to respond to, but also much that is still to be resolved which will require further changes and adaptations. As a family we do not shy away from this, but we do seek some certainty so that we can respond to these changes.
21. Not only are we trying to get on with the day-to-day workload of our busy farming operations exacerbated at the moment by an exceptionally dry winter and spring last year, followed by severe flooding during January. We are also trying to keep up to date with all the other regulatory changes. Added to this has been the stress created by this process and Plan Change 7, knowing that we have debt loaded for irrigation development that we may not be able to sustain. Stress levels are extremely high, we are restless and losing sleep and the process of renewing permits and facing multiple changes to the regional water plan is taking a toll on the health and wellbeing of our usually very robust and optimistic family.

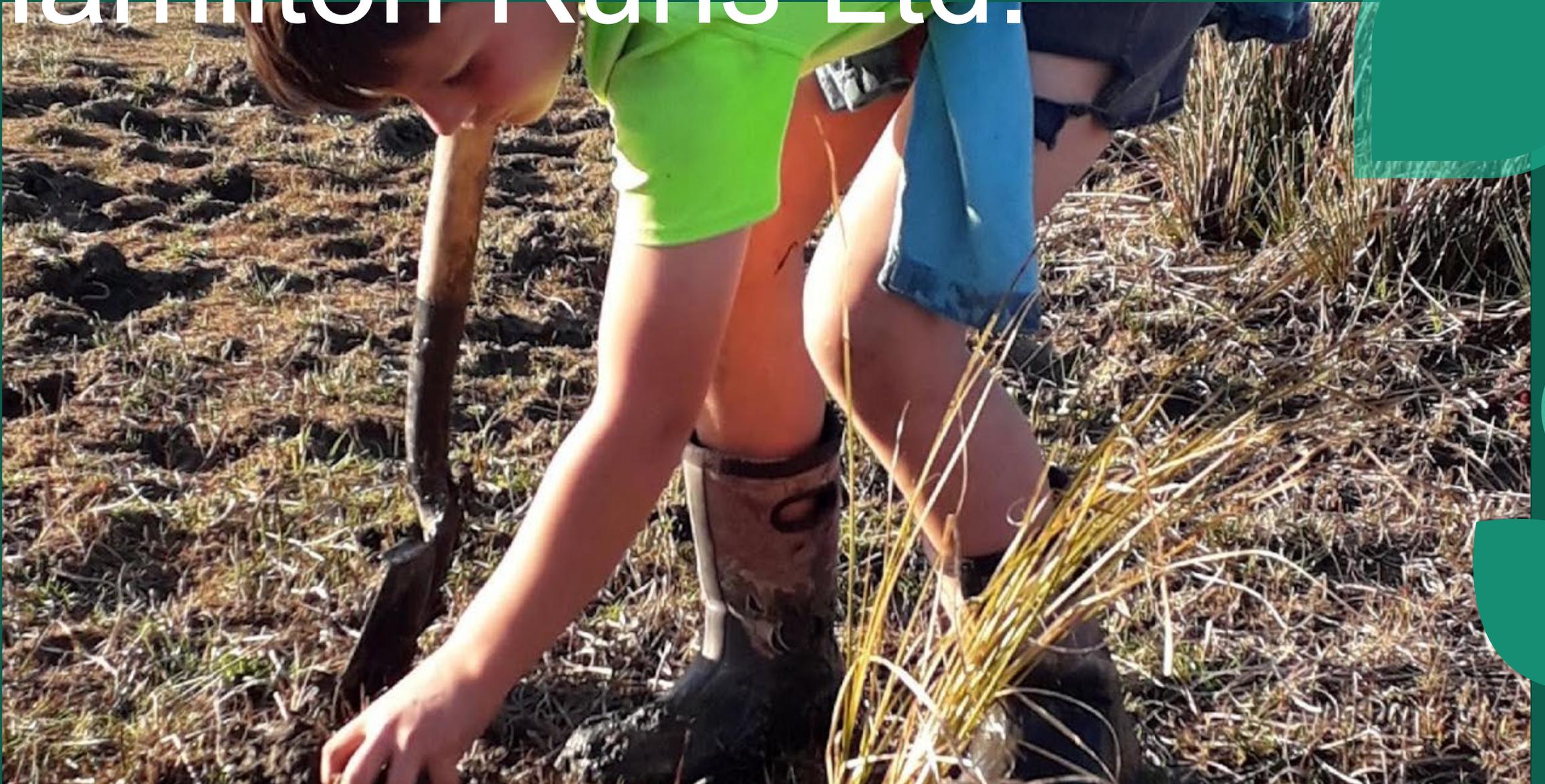
22. Therefore, what we are asking for here is a bit of a certainty. So that we at least know we have the ability to take Pig Burn Water along side our Maniototo water until 2034. This will give us a good platform to work from as we continue to evolve and adapt to the other changes that will keep coming.

**Renee Weir**

**Hamilton Runs Limited**

**31 August 2021**

# Hamilton Runs Ltd.



A person is performing a handstand on a grassy hill. They are wearing a purple hoodie and black pants. Their feet are raised high, holding a pair of black sneakers. The background features rolling hills and a large mountain range under a blue sky with scattered clouds. On the right side of the image, there are several overlapping teal-colored shapes, including a large semi-circle and a smaller circle, which appear to be part of a graphic design.

We are privileged to live on the land we call home and work hard to ensure it is there for generations to come



# Thirsty Work



## Pigburn Creek November 2020

This water source provides drinking water to two of the residential dwellings on our farm. The water is not treated and does not go through a filtration system.

Rural  
Communities

Resourceful  
&  
Practical



We are active  
community members

Helping when and  
where we can.



# Complexities & Challenges





Pigburn in dry conditions 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2020



Pigburn in Flood 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021





Pigburn in flood <sup>no</sup> 2 January 2021

Pigburn Creek in flood Jan 2021  
Causing significant damage to paddocks, fencing and loss of stock.



Damage to  
paddocks after  
flood water  
retreats





Pigburn Creek Intake in January 2021



Current situation after flooding left our intake high and dry. Creek has changed course and flooding gauged creek bed. We are working out options for rectifying this issue prior to irrigation season starting.

One example of further storage development for further efficient water use.



TITLE: STAGE I PIVOT  
CLIENT: HAMILTON RUNS LTD

DATE: 24 NOVEMBER 2015  
LAYER:  
CAD FILE:  
SHEET: 1  
REVISION:  
SCALE: 1:5000

2-16 CONNELLY WAY CROMWELL  
PHONE: 027 474 8326  
027 474 8325

DRAWN BY: D GRAHAM  
DESIGNER:  
CHECKED BY:

This drawing is the property of Irritech Otago Ltd.  
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# Environmental Improvements

- Being solution based to problems is what farmers are good at.
- Working collaboratively with treaty partners and interested parties is essential.
- Irrigators having autonomy to make decisions towards improving the environment they know so well is crucial.

Family spending time  
rescuing fish stranded in  
pools after flood water  
receded.

Who does this if Farmers  
don't have a sense of  
belonging and care for their  
environment that they live  
in?



Southern

# Rural Life

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019

www

## Planting plan paves the way ahead

A Maniototo farming family accepts change is needed in the way things are done. Fencing off waterways, riparian planting and adding stock shelter and shade is all part of their plan, as *Southern Rural Life* reports. See page 4.



Multi generational projects enable real life teaching moments, sharing the knowledge and skills of the past, enabling our future



3,000 Native and Exotic plants and 4ha of land fenced off around storage dam

