

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of Hearing of Submissions and Further Submissions on the Proposed Lower Hutt District Plan under Schedule 1 of the Act

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF AMI COUGHLAN ON BEHALF OF THE
WELLINGTON FISH AND GAME COUNCIL**

HEARING STREAM 5 – NATURAL HAZARDS

1. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

- 1.1 I largely support the approach taken by the Section 42a reporting officer on this Natural Hazards topic.
- 1.2 I will respond here to proposed changes to the Natural Hazards objectives and policies included in our original submission, and provide additional reasoning on the following submission points: NH-O4 (a typographical error in my original submission had this as NH-O3, but related in fact to NH-O4 "Risk to people, buildings, and infrastructure from flood hazards is reduced through mitigation works") and NH-P5.

2. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 2.1 My full name is Ami Coughlan.
- 2.2 I have the following qualifications:
- (a) Bachelor of Environmental Science from Massey University.
 - (b) Master of Science, Ecology with Distinction from Massey University.

2.3 I am employed by the Wellington Fish and Game Council as a Resource Officer. I have held that role since December 2018. As a Resource Officer, I am responsible for:

- (a) Managing the Fish and Game's response to policy, planning, and environmental issues affecting sports fish and/or gamebird values.
- (b) Co-ordinating with the regional Fish and Game Council regarding regional planning and consenting processes relating to resource projects and to the National Fish and Game Council as required.
- (c) Monitoring RMA resource consent applications, preparing submissions in response to planning processes, and advocating for habitat management and access in relation to sports fish and game birds.

3. **CODE OF CONDUCT**

3.1 I confirm that I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023 and have complied with it when preparing this report. Other than where I state that I am relying on the advice of another person, this evidence is within my area of expertise. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

4. **SUBMISSION POINTS WFGC CONTINUES TO SEEK RELIEF FOR**

4.1 After reading the S42a report, WFGC continues to seek relief for NH-O4, NH-P3, and NH-P5

NH-O4

4.2 Please note that in the original submission, I discussed this Objective NH-O4 but had a spelling error and tabled it as NH-O3. The clause description was in there though, which will hopefully clarify the matter.

4.3 Our submission supported this Objective in part, however the insistence that all risk from flood events to people, buildings, and infrastructure is to be reduced via flood mitigations works drives these as the only solution and thereby makes it difficult to make room for evidence-based solutions and improvements on mitigation work.

4.4 The NPS-FM 2020 asks regional councils to balance flood protections with the need to improve or prevent further degradation of our waterways. While Hutt City Council is not a regional council, there is still an expectation of care for the

environment, of working together with Greater Wellington Regional Council, and to avoid where practicable making decisions which will lead to environmental degradation.

- 4.5 Therefore, in my opinion the following relief sought by Greater Wellington, as recorded in the s42a report, was valid:

“Risks to people, buildings and infrastructure from flood hazards is reduced through:

1. mitigation works where appropriate and practicable, and
2. the management of residual risks.

- 4.6 While I cannot speak to point 2, point 1 (managing risks via mitigation works where appropriate) clarifies the original point in my submission, allows for mitigation works, and builds in a natural check point for consenting officers to ask the questions around whether the mitigation requested is reasonable and practicable, or are there other options which fit the criteria of managing risk, while protecting the environment more effectively.

- 4.7 I support adding that phrasing to this objective as follows: “Risks to people, buildings, and infrastructure from flood hazards is reduced through mitigation works where appropriate and practicable.”

5. **NH-P5**

- 5.1 Wellington Fish and Game support the inclusion of this policy, and do not support deleting it from the District Plan.

- 5.2 The policy as drafted identifies options and alternatives that may help councils and consent applicants consider and incorporate measures that are feasible in their circumstances.

- 5.3 Retaining this policy also helps align District Plans with Regional Plans in terms of environmental protections and minimising environmental degradation.

SUBMISSION POINTS WFGC ACCEPTS THE REPORTING OFFICERS RECOMMENDATION

- 5.4 WFGC supports the Reporting Officers recommendations for NH-P2.

- 5.5 WFGC also supports the Reporting Officers recommended changes to NH-P3, as directly naming all parties involved will likely be helpful when assessing and granting consents and indicating where collaboration is required.

WFGC appreciates the opportunity to discuss the Natural Hazards section of the proposed Lower Hutt District Plan.

Ami Coughlan
12 August 2026

Appendix 1: WFGC submission points in the Natural Hazards topic.

Clause	Relief sought (original submission)	S42A recommendation	WFGC response
<i>Please note, this should have been NH-04 in my original submission.</i> NH-03 (stated in original submission) in error. Risk to people, buildings, and infrastructure from flood hazards is reduced through mitigation works.	Support in part: Te Mana o te Wai, the RMA, and the NPS-FM 2020 all speak to the requirement to balance the need to protect human communities and infrastructure with the need to improve our rivers, streams, and waterways. Flood mitigation works often currently involve constraining and channelising the river and controlling water flow with hard engineered solutions. Unfortunately, these solutions degrade the river, become barriers to fish passage, remove habitat heterogeneity, and ultimately increase flood hazard risk in cases of flood protection breach. Allowing the river room to move, lateral space to flood and flow, and more natural characteristics should be actively investigated, as it is around the world, to balance these needs	Retain Objective NH-04 as notified.	I note in the s42a report that similar comments to our submission point were made by the Natural Hazard Commission (supported by Wellington Regional Council). <i>Risk to people, building and infrastructure from flood hazard is reduced through</i> <i>1. Mitigation works where appropriate and practicable; and</i> <i>2. The management of residual risks.</i> WFGC support the inclusion of the first point from the Natural Hazard Commission and Greater Wellington to read: Risk to people, building and infrastructure from flood hazard is reduced through mitigation works <u>where appropriate and practicable.</u>
NH-P2 Levels of risk: Subdivision, use and development manages the natural hazard risk to people, buildings and infrastructure by:	If there is a functional need for the activity to occur, then the effects management hierarchy should be embedded in this clause as a directive for future consent	Retain as in draft, add in overlay from 3.1.5	Support

3) avoiding subdivision, buildings and activities in the high hazard areas of the Natural Hazard Overlays unless there is an operation need or functional need for the building or activity to be located in this area and the building or activity mitigates the existing risk from natural hazards to people, buildings, and infrastructure	pathway as per the NPS-FM 2020 3.21		
NH-P3 Maintain and enhance natural systems and features where they will reduce the existing risk pose by natural hazards to people, buildings, and infrastructure	Support	Amend to: <u>Central government, local government, and landowners</u> maintain and enhance natural systems and features where they will reduce the existing risk posed by natural hazards to people, buildings and infrastructure	WFGC supports proposed amended NH-P3 as written in s 388 of the s 42a report. The addition of naming all parties involved will hopefully be of assistance with consent clarity and collaboration.
NH-P5 Encourage the use of green infrastructure or Matauranga Mauri approaches when undertaking natural hazard mitigation works...	Support	Delete this policy	WFGC do not support deleting the policy. The word 'encourage' is not prescriptive, or enforceable. It merely points to a preferred approaches which may help those who can use them, to think about them, and incorporate what they can. Retaining this policy will also help the District Plan align with Regional Plans now and into the future.