

# Let's stop sniping and work collectively



THE debate about water quality gets muddled by groups squabbling among themselves, akin to a self-inflicted "divide and conquer" of the national community.

Typical was James Bourke's letter (FW, March 31), in which he made some fallacious arguments in calling on Fish and Game to abandon its adversarial approach.

Yet, he is right in terming Fish and Game's stance adversarial. It has been too singly focused in citing only dairying.

Water quality involves not just dairying but urban councils who still discharge sewage into rivers and coastal waters. Forestry runoff also degrades streams.

It is a responsibility of not just the dairy-farming sector but of all New Zealanders.

While sectors fire broadsides at each other, government ministers smile because it takes the heat off them to do

something while the community is scrapping.

Bourke is not correct in saying Fish and Game has access to significant government funding.

My understanding as a trout fishing licence holder is that Fish and Game is funded solely by the trout fishing and duck shooting licence-holding public.

Bourke made some other challengeable assertions. He said didymo was brought to New Zealand by an overseas angler. I heard from a good source that didymo might have arrived on imported second-hand hydro-generation equipment.

He also said trout were major predators of native fish. From stomach contents of several seasons of trout caught in the 1960s and 1970s, trout's staple diet is bottom fauna such as nymphs, with seasonal opportunities such as brown beetles, cicadas and so on.

Rarely did a native fish such as a cockabully feature.

Bourke also raised the phobia

of introduced pest species. In the 21st century ecosystem what isn't introduced?

The major species that has an adverse environmental impact is man. The impact of Maori on moa and other birds and in burning vast areas of land is well recorded. Maori also brought Polynesian rats with them.

Likewise, the impact of Europeans has also been detrimental.

If we are to abhor introduced species all humans had better get out and take introduced species like dairy cows with them.

The fact is we live in a 21st century ecosystem, which has evolved under the impact of at least two migrations of humans.

Let's shun sniping at each other and tackle the problem collectively.

We should order the Government to do something other than produce ineffective plans for freshwater management reform that set far-

off deadlines and make the need for action voluntary rather than mandatory.

And do something other than abandoning democracy and bringing in state control of Environment Canterbury.

Politicians, prime ministers and Cabinet ministers are essentially public servants, not our leaders. Collectively let's remind them of their duty to the public interest and clean up the shameful situation where more than 60% of our rivers are unfit for swimming.

**Tony Orman**  
Marlborough

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aland  
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John Watson 06 323 0761  
Livestock advertising  
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Lana Kieselbach 06 323 0735  
Production Manager  
lana.kieselbach@nzx.com  
Advertising material 06 323 0738  
Rebecca Mills  
adcopy@nzx.com  
Designers - Aaron Davis, Joanne  
Hanam, Sophie Wheeler  
SUBSCRIPTIONS  
Gillian Boyle 06 323 7104  
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