

October 17, 2010

*Re: Developing an Action Plan for Manawatu River Catchment for Forum Leaders, using Mediated Modeling*

Dear participant,

Thank you for committing your time to the project: “Integrated Freshwater Solutions,” using the Mediated Modeling component to develop an Action Plan. Attached is the list of confirmed participants. I believe this is a rich group able to take a broad perspective on issues related to freshwater historically, now and in the future. I’m asking that in thinking about your contributions to this process you think beyond your specific personal and institutional interests and that you’ll apply your thinking and experience toward the question of what is good for the Manawatu River and its Catchment as a whole.

There is currently more interest in this project than spaces at the table and it is my goal to keep this process as open and inclusive as possible. Interested stakeholders beyond the participant list may observe the workshops. All preparations and outcomes of each workshop will be published on the IFS website ([www.ifs.org.nz](http://www.ifs.org.nz)). This is an iterative process and there will be plenty of opportunities during breaks and in between workshops for observers to feed in critical ideas.

The Foundation for Science and Technology (FRST) is funding a research project (IFS at Massey Univ.). The need for an Action Plan from the Manawatu Leaders Forum fits well with the desired research outcomes from the IFS project and therefore, it was decided to use the efforts in synergy. Horizons Regional Council is providing full support toward this process and as such I want to acknowledge their interest in a broad stakeholder discussion with steps toward public outreach. I also want to stress that beyond the initial collaboration organizing the group of participants and the supply of supportive resources, this group will from now on, work on an independent basis within the framework provided by a mediated modeling approach. After the third workshop in December the group will evaluate if the mediated modeling format is productive or whether to change course. Within the mediated modeling format, it is my task to provide this group with the model building blocks and the steps that need to be taken to jointly develop a simulation model as a group. Exactly how this group chooses to take those steps is unknown to me or anybody else. I’ll facilitate that discussion and continue to interpret and summarize the essence of your discussion in modeling terms and draw your attention to the evolving model. The model will be visible at all times during the workshops. Meetings with individuals or sub-groups between workshops will be organized as needed to follow up on workshop issues and/or prepare for subsequent workshops. The construction of a group model (and associated learning) is time consuming and there is no quick fix. It’s about synchronizing the assumptions, clarifying definitions and communicating inter-linkages between social, economic, ecological and cultural aspects in simple yet meaningful ways. If successful, the model building process will help generate an Action Plan in March and develop longer term adaptive capacity. The model itself is of secondary importance; its prime importance is as a means to maintain an in-depth and fact-based discussion. In the longer term, the model is expected to assist with adaptive management.

It is possible that stakeholders may wish to meet with me and/or project team members between workshops to resolve specific model related issues. This intention is

usually brought forward during the workshops, to make it clear to the entire group what progress can be expected at the next meeting. Requests for meetings will be announced to the group in order to maintain an open dialogue and avoid a sense that covert developments are skewing the direction of the overall model. At the beginning of each workshop, the progress of the model will be presented and participants will have a chance to point out concerns, misinterpretations or misrepresentations. A group model building process is an on-going discussion. However, with an additional co-facilitator (Richard Thompson) and additional co-modeller (Ranvir Singh), I'm confident the model clean-up between workshops will happen within the comfort zone of the group.

For the first workshop, you do NOT need to bring data or documents. Please, come with an open mind and the willingness to listen for possibilities and to brainstorm constructively. The appendices provide additional detail about the content of the first workshop, mainly in the form of excerpts from my book: *Mediated Modeling; a systems dynamics approach to environmental consensus building*, published by Island Press, Washington, DC.

Appendix 1: Confirmed participant list and project team

Appendix 2: Schedule, including topics for the first workshop

Appendix 3: Workshop guidelines

Appendix 4: Introduction to systems dynamics thinking and software

Appendix 5: Preliminary model

Appendix 6: Defining success of a mediated modeling process and Action Plan

Appendix 8: Survey

Reading the attachments of this communication is not required to participate effectively on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> of October and Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> of October. The attachments are intended to provide an opportunity to prepare for those who wish to and will be posted on the website.

I'm looking forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Marjan van den Belt, PhD

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Ecological Economics Research New Zealand  
Massey University.