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Good afternoon I'm Arthur Hinds a farmer from Whenuakite and I will speak briefly on the submission from the Mercury Bay Branch of Forest and Bird

As you would expect our focus is on the environment based on ecosystems functioning naturally and we also focus on the future. One of the few advantages of getting older is hindsight and it concerns me how we have degraded our environment. We have to remember it is the only one we have and it is far cheaper to retain what we have than try to reinstate what was once there.

Our Branch of Forest and Bird intend to present again on Biodiversity in April when section 6 & 29 come up but I will add a little now. The proposed plan aims to be enabling and easy to use but unfortunately environmental protection is not quite as simple as that. At present the proposed plan focuses on Biodiversity in high value SNA's but they by themselves cannot sustain and enhance biodiversity values in the region now and into the future. However the Council shouldn't back away from SNA's. They are a valuable part of the area, remnants of what the whole area was once like and must be protected. However the issue needs to be handled far better than it was initially as those who have SNA's have generally worked to retain them and quite rightly resented being told what to do with them. They need support for the retention of these areas.

From my own perspective I'm impressed with the effort that has obviously gone into this plan and I commend the Council planners for that. I found it relatively easy to follow and generally user friendly but you will note that we have suggested various changes, additions or opposed some specific parts.

With regard to two specific issues I wish to comment on today

1. Section 35 Rule 3.2 significant trees. We support this section but consider that adding in requirements for notification would avoid issues seen in other areas where significant trees were consented to be removed.

2. With regard to forestry, again briefly, you will note in our submission in Section 56 – Rural Zone that we state that forestry in the right place has social environmental and economic benefits. However our concern is that forestry on very steep country does create major issues, when clear felling and high rainfall events follow this. While I'm well aware of the consent conditions imposed in the Earnslaw forest at Whangapoua (in excess of 60) run off from steeper poor country is a major issue of concern. The right forestry activity in the right place needs to be encouraged – page 12 of our submission but you will note we also request that clearfell harvesting on erosion prone land – with an Erosion Susceptibility Classification of high or very high be regarded as noncomplying.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to our submission.

Arthur Hinds.