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**WRC candidate name: *Bob Simcock***

*Please type in the space below each question, and use as much space as you require for each answer.*

*Please email your responses back to [info@sustainablewaikato.org.nz](mailto:info@sustainablewaikato.org.nz) not later than **Monday, September 5<sup>th</sup> 2016**.*

**1. What do you think are the top three challenges facing the Waikato region that WRC could influence over the next five to ten years**

Regional leadership. Things have improved in the last three years but our region still trails others in its ability to build consensus and a common voice around the challenges and opportunities we face. The Healthy Rivers project has been a wonderful exception in which all of the interested parties have formed a common view of a key challenge and negotiated a way forward. The council is the only elected body that can facilitate a similar approach across other regional challenges. Central Government is looking to regional councils to do just that.

Protecting the quality and sustainable use of our water resources. The council will soon notify a plan change that responds to our need to clean up the Waikato and Waipa rivers. This will be open to submissions and will test our regions willingness to make the sacrifices that are necessary if we are to protect water quality for future generations. As our population and commercial activity grows we will need to ensure we do a better job of using our resources in a more effective and sustainable manner. Council has begun a broad community conversation about how we should manage water use in the future. It is clear to me that our current method of first come first served consenting is inadequate for the task.

The impact of Auckland growth. For much of the day it now takes longer to travel to Auckland than it has at any other time in my life! If Auckland is allowed to simply spill over the Bombay Hills along the expressway the Waikato's location advantage will have been squandered. Future Proof was an agreement between Waipa, Hamilton, Waikato and the Regional Council about how that would be managed. It appears to be being ignored. It makes little sense for labour intensive industries to operate in a high cost environment like Auckland. We should be encouraging a steady relocation to suitable clusters in the Waikato.

**Do you believe the Regional Council has a role in economic development and in what ways?**

Absolutely. It is hard to find an environment that is healthy when the people in it are impoverished. Conversely we know we cannot sustain a healthy population in a highly degraded environment. We can affect all of these elements through our regulations but by

far our greatest opportunity is through leadership, the building of understanding, consensus, advocacy, and collaborative response. A common voice!

**2. What do you consider to be the main biodiversity and biosecurity issues within the Waikato region, and how can WRC best address them?**

We live in a highly modified environment where many species have been confined into limited habitat or eliminated altogether. A lot of progress has been made toward reversing that trend. Only recently we were celebrating the return of Tui to the city but today they seem to be everywhere. But we have a long way to go. The elimination of predators and invasive species, and the protection and replanting of habitat is a long term collaborative journey on which we have been very lucky to have been joined/lead by various care groups, schools, farmers, church groups. The challenge is to sustain the focus and effort over time. The committee I chair has been overseeing the Source to the Sea project from which we have learned a lot about how we can best work with landowners to redevelop habitat on their properties.

The council has responsibility for the management of established pests, but it is also part of the response network led by the Ministry for Primary Industries who are responsible for boarder control. Recent infestations of velvet leaf have shown us that the border control and early response mechanisms are far from satisfactory. With increasing trade and changing climate, the risk of more species arriving is heightened. We will need to work closely with MPI to improve the current response mechanisms.

**3. What are the major challenges to improving freshwater quality in the Waikato region, and, as a councillor, what would be your priorities?**

While we still need to work on improving point source discharges and particularly the impact of storm water runoff on the rivers by far our biggest challenge is reducing the impact of agriculture. Over time this will involve a complex mix of land use controls, new farming systems, and new technologies. In the short term I will be supporting the notification of a plan change that reflects the consensus reached by the Collaborative Stakeholder Group.

This will limit changes in land use, and require enhanced environmental protection measures on farms.

**What are the priority coastal marine issues in the Waikato region, and what do you think WRC needs to do to address them more effectively?**

As for our rivers, the main source of coastal contaminants is through run off from the land. So cleaning our rivers will help clean our marine environment. Perhaps our biggest marine challenge is to work with our local government colleagues to ensure their planning rules take account of increasing coastal erosion and inundation as a result of sea level rise. While a little controversial at its introduction the sea level rise tool on the councils website is a very useful means of informing the public about possible future impacts. It is very important that WRC does not take on responsibility for protecting land owners who build in high risk environments.

**4. Do you think WRC has a responsibility to have policies to mitigate climate change and manage its impacts? Could you please give some examples?**

As discussed above the council needs to work with TLAs to encourage them to plan developments that reflect likely future sea levels and increased frequency of storm events. The council also has a role in educating communities about the potential impacts on local

economies of more frequent extreme weather events including drought in the north east of the region.

**5. What do you see as the priorities for transport in the Waikato region over the next five to ten years, and how could WRC bring about transportation improvements?**

I expect the transport environment to change significantly over the next ten years with the arrival of electric and autonomous vehicles. Any steps taken are likely to be jointly funded and require the collaboration of central government and other funders. Having said that we need to do everything we can to enable the efficient and rapid flow of people and goods between Auckland and Hamilton and Tauranga. This will require further investment in infrastructure although we should plan with an eye to the new emerging modes of transport so that we can facilitate rapid adoption and avoid investing in stranded infrastructure.

**6. How do you think WRC can best assist community groups and individuals who undertake environmental initiatives?**

By providing funding, planning, resources, and moral support. By doing everything we can to make it easier.

**7. What can WRC do to support businesses, schools, families and individuals to make more sustainable choices?**

In recent years we have seen significant progress particularly around waste management and energy efficiency. This has been supported by a range of initiatives including enviroschools, and sustainability awards. WRC needs to continue to promote, encourage and inform the community about choices that are available to them.

**8. What have been your most significant contributions to enhancing environmental, social, cultural and/or economic wellbeing in the Waikato region?**

All of my contributions have been collaborative and dependent on the effort of others.

Currently in my role as chair of the DHB we are working to reorganise our services using new technologies so that in a few years it won't matter where you live or what your ethnicity you will have the same access to good health as anyone else.

During the last three years I have successfully advocated for the council having a broader regional development function that looks at the social, environmental and economic wellbeing of the region and provides leadership around improvement initiatives.

I was a member of the Guardians Establishment Committee that developed the vision and strategy for the clean-up of the Waikato River.

As Deputy Mayor and then Mayor of Hamilton I lead a collaboration of business, environmental, social, and cultural interests to develop strategies for the future development of the city.

As a Member of Parliament I drafted the first 'liquor ban' bill, and legislation to establish Child Mortality Review panels throughout the country.

As a leader in the deer farming industry I helped establish the early venison processing and marketing structures.

For over twenty five years I have supported my wife Anthea's efforts to ensure all New Zealand's children can live in safe nurturing environments.