



Report 01.196

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Report to the Rural Services and Wairarapa Committee
from Rob Harrison, Classifier

Lower Wairarapa Valley Re-Classification – A J Barton, Ongaha

1. Purpose

To obtain approval of the classification review of Mr A J Barton's property Ongaha.

2. Background

Mr John Barton owns Ongaha, a property situated to the west of Martinborough. It lies adjacent to the right bank of the Ruamahanga River and downstream of the Waihenga Bridge.

Mr Barton has contended since 1994 that he has been unfairly rated. This is based on his claim that the flood effects of the Whaka Drain severely impact on his ability to farm his property effectively.

Based on his belief of unfair rating, Mr Barton has withheld all Scheme rate payments since 1997. Scheme rates presently outstanding, including penalties, total approximately \$17,000.

Council earlier agreed that it would undertake a re-classification once the Whaka Drain improvements had been completed on the property, and R Harrison classified the property in October 2000.

Subsequent to representations made by Mr Barton during a joint inspection just prior to Christmas, some amendments to the classification are included in an adjusted review. Council has also offered to credit Mr Barton \$300 per year towards cost of mechanical cleaning of the Whaka Drain given that Council was not able to undertake drain regrading because of the opposition from the downstream property owner Mr Hedley.

Mr Barton does not accept the most recent classification including the amendments, nor does he agree to Council's offer of \$300 per year to assist cleaning of the Whaka Drain on Mr Barton's property.

It is the adjusted classification review that we now seek approval for.

3. **Classification Review – John Barton, Ongaha**

In 1996, following his first visit with Mr Barton, Mr Harrison advised in writing that any re-classification might not necessarily produce a desired result from Mr Barton's viewpoint. Mr Barton chose to pursue his request for classification review.

A comprehensive review of the existing classification turned up a number of anomalies which were amended in the first instance. Some of these favoured Mr Barton, but the process also showed deficiencies countering this effect.

Mr Barton's objections to the current review are based on the following:

That there should be no difference in classification between lands near George's Road on the basis that the land is all the same level.

Historic photos confirm this is not the case, and it is proposed the classification not be changed.

That the Whaka Drain, itself the centre of controversy for several years, has been totally changed with consequent adverse effects on the land adjacent to it.

We believe the classification has fairly considered the effects of any flooding on land near the drain.

That the lagoons should not be rated at all.

Under the classification criteria used, the lagoons have an outfall, which theoretically places them in Class E. They have been left in Class F.

That sand dune land to the south of existing remnant forest remained flood free before stopbanking in the early 1980's.

Historic photos refute this, excepting the top sections of the dune features. It is proposed to leave the re-classification of this area unchanged.

4. **The Classification as Proposed**

The current classification on Ongaha produces a rating liability of \$3008.86 per annum.

Under the re-classification proposals as per attachment 1, this increases to \$3085.65. Both figures are inclusive of GST.

I believe the classification offered for approval is fair relative to other properties in the Lower Valley Development Scheme.

5. **Communciation**

Other than communication with Mr Barton, no other communication initiatives are considered necessary on this matter.

6. **Recommmendation**

That the Committee:

1. *Accept the report from the Classifier noting that the classification has been amended following consultation with and representations from Mr Barton.*
2. *Advise Mr Barton that there is to be no further change to the classification until the overall Lower Valley Scheme classification review which is scheduled to be undertaken in 2003.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission by:

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Classifier

C F Wright
Divisional Manager, Wairarapa

I Gunn
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