A Wolf Dressed In Metropolitan Clothing

If ever there was a case of putting the cart in front of the horse, the latest Proposed Change One to the Regional Policy Statement from the GWRC would have to be a classic case.
The notified changes had to be addressed to meet a deadline regarding 'urban intensification' however what is particularly galling is that while they were at it, they thought they'd include new rules regarding climate change, biodiversity and water as well. This is immediately after the PNRP (Proposed Natural Resources Plan) has finally been put to bed.
Apparently GWRC don't agree with the Zero Carbon Act (ZCA) split targets of the two differing emission gases, carbon and methane, all while the Ag Sector is negotiating with Government on a system to manage their emissions. The below graph illustrates how they want to go harder on combined emissions, that ignore the split gas approach that is backed by science.

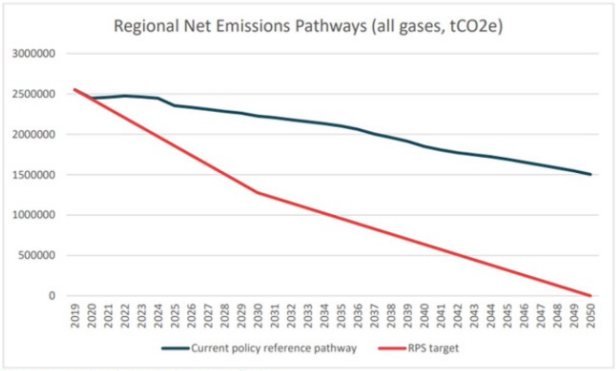

Figure 1 – Regional New Emissions Pathways

The area between the lines is the total greenhouse gas emissions avoided if the RPS targets are met, assuming a linear progression between the targets.

What do these targets that go above and beyond mean? Not only do they require a 30% tree canopy cover, by suburb, by 2050, the only current solution to meet them would likely require the bulk of the Wairarapa's hill country and valley floor to be planted in trees.
Speaking of science, the latest metric for methane's impact on warming is still being ignored despite the recommendations in the latest IPCC Report (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), chapter 7.

- The report clearly states that a 0.3 percent reduction per year in methane is equivalent to net zero for CO2 – that is, there would be no additional warming at this level.
- The report also clearly states that the current accounting method, known as GWP100 (which compares the global warming potential of emissions over a 100-year period) **overstates** the effect of constant methane emissions on global surface temperature by a factor of 3-4 over a 20-year horizon, while **understating** the effect of new (or increasing) methane emissions by a factor of 4-5 over a 20-year horizon.
- It notes that an alternative accounting method, known as GWP*, scales emissions over time and better accounts for the different warming behaviours of short-lived gases.

- The report recommends careful choice of metrics and consideration of the different impact of short-lived and long-lived gases when building pricing systems for emissions and when undertaking life-cycle analysis, for example comparing the carbon footprint of foods.
- This report is very important for the ongoing conversation about the target in the Zero Carbon Bill of 24-47 percent reduction in methane by 2050. The science laid out in the IPCCC report makes it clear those targets mean methane producers would be going beyond reductions required to prevent additional warming and would be reversing previous warming, while fossil fuel emitters only need to get to "no additional warming" by 2050.
- B+LNZ has been frustrated for some time by claims agriculture was being "let off the hook" by the 24-47 percent reduction targets and the IPCC report makes it clear this is not the case.
- It also makes it clear that if methane is stable or reducing (as it has been in New Zealand since 2001) then using GWP100 to report on methane's contribution each year to climate change is inaccurate. Methane in New Zealand may be around 40 percent of annual emissions, but it **has not been 40 percent of warming each year for quite some time.**

**Source-Beef and Lamb 12th August 2021*

In simple language the new metric GWP* replaces the 30 year old metric that is no longer fit for purpose. There has been no pushback on the science, GWP* accurately reflects the warming impact of the gas and this aligns with the Paris Accord.

GWRC's appetite to circumvent the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), the ZCA, and the Agricultural Industry led plan 'He Waka Eke Noa' reeks of dis-connection and arrogance. It's nothing short of forcing individual viewpoints as viewed through a metropolitan lens, onto provincial areas such as the Wairarapa.

GWRC's Climate Committee Chairman Thomas Nash states *"Wellington could go further because it has more capacity to do so compared to other regions like Southland or Taranaki. Wellington's compact urban form, well developed public transport networks, and being **less reliant on agriculture** made it easier."*

Given that 57% of the GWRC region is deemed farmland (StatsNZ 2017) of which 49% (401,540 hectares) is in the Wairarapa, perhaps this attitude may accelerate a conversation about the Wairarapa becoming a Unitary Authority, where the science and our values are better reflected.