

**BEFORE THE INDEPENDENT HEARING PANEL**

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of Proposed Plan Change 9 to the Operative Hamilton City  
District Plan

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF Chad Croft**

**SIGNIFICANT NATURAL AREAS**

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**Thomas Gibbons**  
[thomas@gibbonslaw.co.nz](mailto:thomas@gibbonslaw.co.nz)  
021 675 091  
Panama Square, 14 Garden Place, Hamilton

**Thomas Gibbons Law**

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## Introduction

1. My name is Chad Croft. My role is as a Principal Ecologist with Ecology New Zealand Ltd. I have been the lead ecologist on the implementation of the ecological conditions of the resource consent enabling the development of the Te Awa Lakes project.
2. I hold the qualifications of BSc Conservation and Wildlife Management from the University of British Columbia. I am a professional ecologist with 20+ years' experience with specialist expertise in ecological impact assessment, mitigation and terrestrial and freshwater habitat restoration. I have worked with clients across a wide variety of industries including oil and gas, forestry, mining, transportation and construction as well as various government authorities throughout multiple jurisdictions in both Canada and New Zealand. I am a current member of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand, and a former Registered Professional Biologist of both the College of Professional Biology in British Columbia, Canada and the Society of Professional Biologists in Alberta, Canada.

I have been called upon as an expert witness for ecology related topics in the matter of:

- Proposed Private Plan Change 2 to the Hamilton City Operative District Plan: Te Awa Lakes Private Plan Change;
  - A submission in respect of the Proposed Waikato District Plan by Ambury Properties Limited pursuant to Clause 6 of Schedule 1 of the Act seeking the rezoning of land at Ohinewai
  - A Notice of Requirement for the Peacocke Sports Park Designation under section 168A of the Resource Management Act 1991
  - A submission in respect of a Resource Consent application for a landfill to both Environment Canterbury and Waimakariri District Council
3. Relevant project examples and roles include: Highland Valley Copper Mine, Logan Lake British Columbia, Canada (2003) – Co-Lead biologist responsible for ecosystem mapping and impact assessment as part of proposed mine expansion application; COMINCO Tulsequah Chief Mine, Atlin, British Columbia, Canada, (2006-07) – Lead biologist responsible for ecosystem and critical wildlife habitat mapping, and stream crossing assessment as part of proposed new mine access

road application; Imperial Oil (Exxon Mobil) In situ Oil Sands extraction, Cold Lake Alberta, Canada, (2004-07) – Lead biologist responsible for ecosystem classification and restoration planning as part of Ecological Impact Assessment for mine expansion; Imperial Oil (Exxon Mobil) Natural Gas extraction, Tilley Alberta, Canada, (2003-07) – Lead biologist responsible for ecosystem classification, species at risk surveys and habitat restoration planning as part Ecological Impact Assessment for multiple gas pad and access road expansion; Comfort Group, mixed Commercial/Residential Development, Ohinewai, NZ, (2019-2022) - Principal and lead ecologist responsible for ecosystem classification, threatened species surveys and mitigation planning as part of Ecological Impact Assessment for Waikato District Plan change application; Hamilton City Council, Southern Links Strategic Transport Network, - Principal and lead ecologist responsible for providing ecological advice in support of Resource Consent application for works outside the designation; Questral Corporation Ltd, Broadwater Retirement Village development, Hamilton, NZ, (2019) - Principal and lead ecologist responsible for ecosystem classification, threatened species surveys and mitigation planning as part of Resource consent application.; Perry Group/Te Awa Lakes Unincorporated, Te Awa Lakes Mixed Use Development, Hamilton NZ, (2019) - Principal and lead ecologist responsible for ecosystem classification, threatened species surveys and mitigation planning as part of Resource consent application and expert witness on ecology matters; Hamilton City Council, Peacockes Sports Park Notice of Requirement (2022), Principal and lead ecologist responsible for ecosystem classification, threatened species surveys and mitigation planning as part of NOR and expert witness on ecology matters.

4. I am familiar with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses (Environment Court Practice Note 2023) and although I note this is a Council hearing, I agree to comply with this code. The evidence I will present is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on information provided by another party. I have not knowingly omitted facts or information that might alter or detract from opinions I express.

#### **Scope of Evidence**

5. This evidence addresses ecological issues at the site within Te Awa Lakes known as Horotiu East South (or “HES”).
6. I refer to my memorandum dated 19 August 2022 (copy attached) and confirm the contents of that memorandum as part of my statement of evidence. That

memorandum sets out the location, description, and ecological context of the site; the methodology used; the findings; the SNA assessment criteria under the Waikato Regional Policy Statement (“RPS”); and my conclusions.

7. In particular, for the purposes of this statement, I wish to reiterate that in respect of the areas described in the memorandum:
- a. For area 1, criterion 3 of the RPS is met in respect of the known presence of At-Risk – Declining species as follows:
    - i. The presence of copper skinks (*Oligosoma aeneum*), which were located through targeted hand-searching; and
    - ii. Within the permanent stream, the presence of giant kōkopu (*Galaxias argenteus*) which were identified through spotlight surveys.
  - b. For area 1, no other significance criteria in the RPS were considered met.
  - c. For areas 2-5, none of the significance criteria in the RPS were considered met.
  - d. I note that the 4Site SNA Master data set states that area 1 (identified as C59 in the data set) was considered to meet RPS criteria 3,8,10 and 11. It is my opinion that criteria 8, and 10 are not well represented by area 1 due to the absence of ‘critical’ habitat for the specific indigenous fish species found within the stream.
  - e. I agree that area 1 could be considered representative of criteria 11 due to its connectivity with area c76 and the protection the mature overstory provides to the permanent stream.

Dated at Hamilton this 28/04/2023

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Chad Croft