



New Zealand 02.1 Canoeing

A sad start to the summer

The summer of 2001/02 did not get off to a great start with the drowning of two schoolgirls on the Clarence River while Canadian canoeing and then shortly afterwards the death of a Christchurch paddler on the Hokitika River while on a club trip.

The Maritime Safety Authority (MSA) has investigated both of these tragedies with the assistance of a 'technical expert' (Brett Whiteley/Graham Charles) from the NZRCA. As this newsletter goes to print we are awaiting the final reports from the MSA and will release a summary of the findings on the website, www.rivers.org.nz.

The NZRCA would like to acknowledge both Brett and Graham for their involvement in these difficult circumstances. We can now have confidence that the reports will contain information that will be useful to the kayaking community. Paddle safely people.

An account of the tragedy on the Hokitika is given on page 6.

In this issue...

The summer issue is always a good one for tales of paddling adventures, and we have a story about the little paddled upper section on the Ruakituri River. Our other trip report is an account of the beautiful Madi Khola in Nepal, a paddling paradise for those inclined to dream about overseas boating.

Our Conservation Officer Maree Baker describes the case made by the NZRCA at the Water Conservation hearing for the Rangitata River. President Robin Rutter-Baumann and Mike Savory (Access Officer) spent a day in Hokitika discussing some potential guidelines for river users who come across whio, our rare and wonderful blue ducks. These draft guidelines are intended to help kayakers understand what to do when you see whio, and help the Department of Conservation in protecting these birds.

Graham Charles alerts us to alterations in rivers in the lead up to the 3rd Edition of New Zealand Whitewater, see page 3.

Summer 2002

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About *New Zealand Canoeing*

New Zealand Canoeing is the official newsletter of the New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association (NZRCA) Inc. *NZ Canoeing* is published quarterly and distributed free to around 1,000 members of the NZRCA throughout New Zealand/Aotearoa.

The views expressed in *New Zealand Canoeing* are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Executive of the New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association.

NZ Canoeing welcomes advertising from organisations associated with recreational canoeing. Please contact us for our advertising rates, and find out how to show your products and services to kayakers around NZ.

Thanks to Robin Rutter-Baumann, Graham Charles, Alan Bell, Vladimir Filipovic, Doug Rankin, Maree Baker, Ian Gill, Janet Nicol, Laura Nicol, Mike Savory and the myriad of e-mail correspondents for their contributions to this issue of *NZ Canoeing*. May the rivers flow for you!

Contributions of articles, trip reports, classified advertisements, and letters for publication are gratefully received.

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The deadline for material for the Autumn newsletter is 15 March 2002.

All map references are to NZMS Infomap 260 Topographical series.

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**Interested promoting the NZRCA,
raising the profile of the Association,
and playing a vital role in saving our
rivers?**

**We have a vacancy for the position of
Vice President. Contact Robin on
president@rivers.org.nz for more
details.**

River alterations – changes to New Zealand Whitewater

Graham Charles

I have been struggling through the third edition of New Zealand Whitewater. This must be the most diabolical summer ever to try and do this. Regardless, there will be a new book out to you by the middle of this year. Changes everyone needs to be aware of:

1. The Upper Kakapotahi has a blockage in the tunnel (last drop) and is unrunnable. There is no portaging option except straight up the moss cliff to the road. Hardly worth it for the 300m of paddling you get. The Lower run is fine.
2. The Lower Hokitika has a massive slip just out of Kakariki Canyon. The technical grade hasn't changed but the objective danger is higher with trees and very sharp rock in the water. Don't sit around at the bottom of the slip – it is very active with rocks trundling regularly. This will keep changing as the slip face (out of sight from the river) is enormous.
3. The access road to the Totara and Mikonui Rivers has been seriously damaged by slips. This road also gave good access to tramping and climbing in the back country. The Westland District Council is suggesting closing the road as it will cost \$500,000 to fix. Contact Trevor James tj@wrcr.govt.nz and support the move to get the road fixed.
4. The Arahura, Taipo, Whitcombe, Whataroa are all good still.
5. The upper Hokitika (Viagra Run) may be cut off as well due to rock slides at the head of one of the gorges.

Unless you've done the run don't take anything as given. There have been massive amounts of water through all rivers and all the rules have changed. Always keep scanning for new trees and sieves. Carry your little wood saw and anyone who ends up in the water get them out as soon as possible. Worry about the boat later.

NZRCA members get a discount when you buy NZ White Water on line - check www.rivers.org.nz/nzww for details.

Tekapo Course Update

This year has been one for the record books at Tekapo. Recreational releases scheduled for all of October and November were postponed due to Lake Tekapo being below its minimum operating level. Under their resource consent if the lake is below a certain level in November to March they are not allowed to generate, and the recreational releases must be postponed. It seemed that Meridian Energy generating as much as they could over the September 'drought' due to the high electricity prices didn't help much either.

Only two months later the lakes are now above the maximum operating level and Meridian Energy has had to release 120 cumecs down the river all week, to try and keep the lake level down. Recreational Releases have now had to be cancelled due to too much water in the river!

Another trial of the Whitewater course in December has resulted in some more modifications to the course over Xmas. Unfortunately the high lake levels have meant that these have not yet been tested.

The Pukaki Release this year is a two day release on 23 & 24 Feb (see www.rivers.org.nz), see you there.

Events

The first Festival of Australian Canoeing is to be held at the Sydney International Regatta Centre and the Penrith Whitewater Stadium from the 29th March to the 7th April, 2002.

The event organisers invite canoeists, kayakers and rafters to compete in the seven paddle sports being conducted; Sprint (Flatwater) Racing, Canoe Polo, Marathon Racing, Slalom Racing, Wildwater Racing, Freestyle and Whitewater Rafting.

The Canoe 2002 Information Booklet and discipline entry forms are now available from the website www.canoe.org.au. Please email auscanoe@canoe.org.au if you would like the information emailed directly.

New book

Sea Kayaker's Guide to New Zealand's Upper North Island by Vincent Maire.
Available from the Auckland Canoe Centre.

A tale of two gurlies on the Madi Khola

Polly Miller

Nepal ... just the thought of the mighty Himalayas combined with a monsoon climate will make any kayaker's eyes light up. Combine this with an excellent guide book written by Peter Knowles, a few rave reviews from paddling friends, and the fact that once you're there even NZ\$ last a long time, and Jess and I were easily inspired.

Overwhelmed by the energy and atmosphere of Kathmandu, we elected to join a rafting trip for our first boating experience. The monsoon was late, so the rivers were high, and many of the rivers had not yet been run that season. Chatting on e-mail with Dave Allardice from Ultimate Descents, I heard of his plan to raft the Karnali River in early October. With wide smiles and promises to at least look like confident safety kayakers, we were part of the team.

One of the joys of travel in Asia is the long, long bus rides. The advantage of Nepal is that although it took 26 hours to get from Kathmandu to the put-in, we felt a sense of achievement in traversing more than half of the country. Jess and I found that adopting a Nepali attitude to time was very helpful, and we maintained this relaxed approach for most of the trip.

The Karnali was definitely an interesting learning experience in terms of rafts and logistics. Happily, the paddling was all big water class four. The more we paddled with rafts, the more our feet itched to get out on our own. So at the take out for the Karnali, we cruised off to investigate Bardia National Park with its elephants, rhinos and monkeys, and then on to Pokhara.

**Photo 1: Jess and a sadu in Durbar Square, Kathmandu.
Photo: Polly Miller**

Jess and a sadu in Durbar Square, Kathmandu. Photo: Polly Miller

Pokhara is about as close as Nepal gets to a resort. With the Annapurnas visible from the lakeside early in the morning, and beautiful villages just a short walk away, you can enjoy a beer and plan your next trip in comfort. Jess and I used Pokhara as a base from which to go on a number of multiday missions to the Modi Khola, the Kali Gandaki, the Madi Khola and the Marsyandi Rivers.

Our favourite trip was the Madi Khola. Our second unsupported trip, the Madi Khola promised to provide us with challenging boating within our personal limits, and the inevitable limits of boating in a two person team.

Getting to the river is always part of the fun in Nepal, and to get to the Madi Khola we needed a jeep, and then two porters to carry our boats to the put in. We had heard that hiring porters was a "warmly memorable" experience, and certainly we were very entertained. Bargaining was observed by most of the locals in a small village, and much interest was taken in our Nepali phrasebook (and very limited knowledge of the language). We hadn't anticipated that our porters, once the price had been agreed, would pick up our boats and literally run up the hill. Loaded with gear, each boat weighed over 30kg, and yet Jess and I, carrying only our paddling gear, struggled to keep up.

Climbing the ridge and dropping down into the valley of the Madi Khola, we saw beautiful terraced rice paddies, all a translucent green, and a pristine river with bright blue water busy with white. It was very difficult to be worried about the drops on such a perfect day, local children greeted us and ran after us, and we could see the traditional lifestyle as people prepared for the rice harvest.

We were entering the Annapurna Conservation Area, for which we did not have a permit. Our enthusiasm for the adventure meant that when we unexpectedly reached an official asking for a permit (the guidebook and map advised us that the permit station was some way up the river), we simply paid our bemused porters, jumped on the river and paddled away. Three kilometres of class 4 with the occasional class 5 rapid later, and we were completely

Photo 2: Negotiating with porters on our way to the Madi Khola. Photo: Polly Miller

Negotiating with porters on our way to the Madi Khola. Photo: Polly Miller

toasted. The monsoon, still not quite over, delivered an unseasonal deluge. We made camp, contending with the rain, the unwanted and insistent attention of several children, and the occasional leech.

Next morning Jess sprang out of bed to make tea and try and enthuse me in the process getting up. The class 4+ rapid racing noisily past our campsite seemed to drain me of any courage I'd had the night before and I was feeling somewhat less than big and brave as we packed up the fly. Jess (wisely as it turned out) decided to walk upstream and paddle the last rapid we'd done the day before.

Warming up obviously helps – I proceeded to fall down the first rapid, rolling twice before making an eddy and getting it together. I soon cheered up, as we paddled gorgeous clean rapid after rapid, pausing to scout when the river totally disappeared from view. Jess paddled the few class five drops, which I cheerfully walked.

At the top of a fairly innocuous looking jumble of white, Jess called confidently "I can see a line," and paddled off. Pausing in an eddy, I watched as Jess stopped in a hole, went upside down, and disappeared except for a vertical paddle blade working furiously. This went on for some time, while I scouted and paddled down the rapid. From the bottom of the rapid, I could see that the point where Jess's hole was flushing was blocked by a rock, and I began to get worried about a possible swim and the prospect of rescue before the next rapid just 20 metres away. Happily, Jess was able to work her way out with no more problem than a few scratches on her flash new helmet.

Learning from our experience of being the local entertainment the night before, we managed to find a deserted beach, suitably distant from swing bridges and villages, and on the opposite side of the river from the main track up the valley. Our polished camping routine meant that another deluge was no trouble, and our one-pot-wonder dinner was particularly delicious. The beauty of our campsite was accentuated by a morning view of mountains – and a gentle stretch of class 2 and 3 water directly downstream. Bliss.

Our last day on the Madi Khola was one of those times you wish for a play boat and more time and energy. We blasted through a fantastic class 2 and 3 play section, down to the confluence with the Seti Khola and the main road. On previous trips, we had learnt it pays to take out around midday – then you're much more likely to be able to find local transport to where you want to go. Happily, we connected with a bus full of rafters on their way to Pokhara. We reached our hotel on a real high – buzzing that we'd managed to pull off such an amazing trip with absolutely no epics. Time for a beer and a plan for the next mission...

Boating in Nepal is particularly fantastic in October and November, as this is when the monsoon has stopped. The weather is mainly clear and fine, and the views of the mountains are impressive. We found that it cost around \$10US per person per day for everything. Book your flights early, as getting in and out of Kathmandu can be tricky in peak tourist season. We highly recommend Peter Knowles's *Whitewater Nepal* (2nd Ed).

Photo 3: A rare stretch of unruffled water, a perfect day and a view of the Annapurnas. Photo: Polly Miller

*A rare stretch of unruffled water, a perfect day and a view of the Annapurnas
Photo: Polly Miller*

Tragedy on the Lower Hokitika

Vladimir Filipovic, President of the White Water Canoe Club

The news of Rod Banks' death on the Hokitika River on 18 November 2001 spread through the kayaking community like lightning. A lot of people in Canterbury knew Rod through his various outdoor activities. He was 45 and a father of 2. He was involved in sea kayaking, multi-sport, down river racing, and whitewater kayaking. He was well known for his free spirit and boundless energy.

A group of us from the White Water Canoe Club were kayaking the Lower Hokitika that day. Most of us had paddled this section many times before. It was a warm, gray, day with light rain; the water was low and clear. Fourteen of us flew in to just below Kawau Gorge. The tragedy occurred between Kawau Gorge and Kakariki Canyon, just after noon. I still remember the feeling when we pulled Rod from the water. People were upset and distressed – “could I have done anything more”, was the question people were asking themselves. Getting the group down the rest of the river was an effort in itself, people lost confidence, paddling strokes were shaky, it took us a while to paddle the section between Kakariki Canyon and the Whitcombe confluence.

This is the first time in our Club's history we have had a fatal incident. As a club we have not been in a similar situation. Probably it was the most difficult period in our Club's history. This is not the first time something like this happened in New Zealand. A couple of years ago we had two fatal incidents here: an American paddler drowned on the Upper Hokitika and a German paddler drowned on the Nevis River. They were both experienced paddlers paddling very hard pieces of water. This is the first time a White Water Club paddler drowned on a river that we paddle often.

We tried to help the people that were on the trip. We organised group and individual counseling through Victim Support. This helped enormously. We feared the Media and its ability to sensationalise. Media hype was the last thing Rod's family needed at that time. We prepared a media release, however the club was not contacted. The Christchurch Press published a brief news item, and an article about Rod. The Coroner and the Maritime Safety Authority launched investigations. Graham Charles was appointed by the MSA as their expert to investigate. We were in constant contact with the NZRCA and Graham during the investigation. The investigation has been finished and there will be a hearing in the Hokitika Coroner's Court in February, when the decision will be made about the future of the investigation.

We are all interested to hear the findings of Graham's investigation and to learn from them. But regardless of that, we all know that kayaking is a risky sport and that we will never completely eliminate risk associated with it. We believe we run safe club trips; we did all we thought possible to minimise

risk, we carried a lot of safety gear, we teamed up. Was that enough? What, as a club, can do you do? What can you do to minimise the risk of serious injuries or death? Do you prescribe the rivers you are allowed to paddle on club trips?

Clubs can minimize the risk by raising safety standards, educating kayakers and helping them to raise their personal paddling skills. The more kayakers we get out there that can roll, the safer our trips will be. For many years our club has been offering subsidised safety, rescue and paddling courses to its members. In the last couple of years we had a disappointing response. I hope that this will change.

I have had long conversations with Graham Charles about this, and the future of kayak clubs. Three seasons ago we had a problem with participation in our club trips. We had to cancel a number of trips due to lack of interest. Graham calls it “café” paddling; you find a tight group of friends and you paddle what you like, you do not participate in a club and do not want to waste your time on club trips helping less experienced paddlers. A latte in a bowl and a cappuccino please.

Over the last two seasons the situation in our club improved enormously. We changed our trip list and the rivers we run. It is not unusual to get 15-20 people on a trip. Last December we had 34 paddlers turning up for a trip! And people are excited about the West Coast, about flying in, and doing more paddling. We are probably one of the more active clubs; our trip list is full of trips from grade II - IV.

What do you do? Do you stop all this and go back to the old days of “let’s paddle the Hurunui and the Waiau 1000 times this season”? Most of us started on the Hurunui or the Waiau (or in my case on the Ni... nevermind, you would never work out how to pronounce it!) We paddled those rivers weekend after weekend, year after year. They were our “home runs”. We would go to the Buller or the Matakītiki if we wanted to do something more exciting. Or when we felt wild we would organise a helicopter trip to the middle Taipo, or go run the Rangitāta Gorge.

Now we go to the West Coast. We paddle the Kakapotahi and the Hokitika when there is nothing else to paddle. The West Coast rivers are becoming our home runs. Do you leave those trips off the club’s calendar and leave them to “private” trips? How then can a kayaker that is moving from grade III to IV be introduced to harder runs?

We kayak because we love the sport, the outdoors, and the water. We all enjoy pushing and scaring ourselves while paddling that new river. We all indulge in the sense of achievement once we finish and “conquer” another river. But how do you do this without another tragedy? I am not quite sure I have the answers at this point in time, but would like to hear what other people think about this.

The Autumn issue of NZ Canoeing will publish the findings of the MSA reports, and suggestions for clubs on how to make club trips, and paddling safer. For more information on safety, and how you can claim your subsidy for a River Safety and Rescue course check the website www.rivers.org.nz.

Let’s all help the fabulous Blue Duck (whio)

Ian Gill, Department of Conservation

The West Coast’s wild and turbulent rapids are home to a unique whitewater paddler - the blue duck (whio). This New Zealand icon feeds in whitewater, is very territorial, and is one of only four duck species world-wide to spend their entire lives in a river habitat.

The guidelines under trial this summer recognise that people and river craft can alarm whio - particularly when escape routes are restricted or ducklings are present. Kayakers can help by avoiding undue contact with whio in their river habitat and by monitoring whio by reporting sightings to any DOC office or by using the Internet report system found at www.blueduck.org.nz

Guidelines

- Scan ahead for whio. When they are encountered be as quiet as possible, move slowly and deliberately, try to keep as far away as conditions and safety will allow. Combine with other craft to minimise the disturbance period. Above all else always try to manoeuvre past the birds without pushing them downstream.
- If whio are moving towards your craft, take up a motionless position on the opposite bank until past. In wide sections take the widest route possible past the birds, and consider carrying craft along the opposite bank in narrow sections.
- If whio are agitated eddy out at first available opportunity and give the birds time to settle. Evaluate the best avoidance method.
- If broods are split from parents, craft should eddy out as far away from the birds as possible - allow the birds to find each other again.
- Maintain a distance that ensures they are not alarmed. They are best observed and photographed from a downstream vantage.

Points to note for reporting

- Number of birds seen
- Presence of ducklings
- Where the birds were seen
- Time the birds were seen
- Behaviour of birds during observation
- Method employed to get past birds
- Summary of the response of birds.

For more information please contact Ian Gill at the West Coast Conservancy 03 755 8301, or igill@doc.govt.nz.

Remember, non-sightings are as important as sightings.

If you’re on a river you know is a whio habitat, and see no ducks, please report this on line at www.blueduck.org.nz.

The Ruakituri River – a seldom paddled gem

Alan Bell

The Ruakituri River flows southeast from the Urewera National Park and meets the Wairoa River just above the Te Reinga Falls. The upper section of the river (from Mangatahae Stream to Papuni) has been paddled by Hawkes Bay paddlers for some years although it is not mentioned in Graham Egar's description of the river. There has even been a chopper trip further up which took 9 hours including a mandatory portage around the scenic Waitangi Falls. If you're into maps, check out NZMS 260 - W18 Waikaremoana.

After gaining local knowledge from Warren Hales and other Hawkes Bay CC paddlers we set out to run this "unknown" (to us) river. In a note to me, Matt Saunders from the Hawkes Bay Canoe Club described the upper section of the river as follows... "The Ruakituri is a short challenging run. Reminiscient of the Mangahao and Rangitikei Rivers, with reasonable gradient over papa slides and boulder gardens that require bank scouting. HBCC guys have paddled all rapids bar the crux rapid about #three (obvious) – has a mandatory portage, lead in has two undercut rocks. Have fun, the waterfall is a blast..."

How to get there

Travel west from Wairoa towards Waikaremoana on SH 38 until you get to Frasertown. Then turn right and continue until you get to the Ruakituri Valley Road and the Te Reinga Falls on the Wairoa River. There is a look-out across the bridge. After viewing these interesting falls head on up the Ruakituri Valley Road until you get to a bridge across the river at Erepeti (just past a golf course and just past the Papuni Road turnoff). This is the get-out for the Grade2-3 section.

Photo 4: Ali shows the line on an early drop on the Ruakituri River. Photo: Alan Bell

Ali shows the line on an early drop on the Ruakituri River. Photo: Alan Bell

Go back to the Papuni Road turnoff and turn into Papuni Rd. At this point the river is on your left and the road veers away from the river. Further along, a road on the left will take you down to another bridge at Puhoro which can be used as the get in for the Grade 2-3 run down to Erepeti Bridge and/or the get out for a short Grade 3 run.

Continue on up the valley until you cross a ford and come to Papuni Station. This is the get out for the Grade 4 section (leave your vehicle where you can see it from the river). This is also the get in for a short Grade 3 run (1 hr) down to Puhoro Bridge or a longer Grade2-3 (3 hrs) down to Erepeti Bridge.

To get to the Grade 4 get in, continue up the valley and note that the road leaves the river for a while. About half way along you get a view down to the river and you can see the early boulder gardens. After crossing the bridge on the Mangatahae Stream the road heads back to the river – this is the get in. Don't be alarmed – it is dead flat here. Seal launch down the grass bank and get ready to have some fun! It will take 2.5 to 3 hours easy driving from Wairoa to the get in.

Flows

When we paddled it when the river was clear, and recent rain meant it was not too low. The river needs some rain, but is paddleable at a range of flows. I expect that at low summer flows there may be more portaging while at high flows most rapids would be runnable but there would be some big holes. The lower Grade 2-3 section definitely benefits from rain and could be bony in summer. The gauge for this river is visual.

Photo 5: Clinton runs the first waterfall.
Photo: Alan Bell

Clinton runs the first waterfall. Photo: Alan Bell

Description

After half a kilometre of flat water there are several easy boulder gardens. These are followed by a very constricted rapid with a nasty looking chute. Paddle at your peril, we portaged this one. This is followed by several nice rocky rapids. The third major rapid is characterised by the whole river disappearing into a rock sieve. Portaging can be accomplished from either bank. For the next 200m the boulder gardens are amazing with huge rocks and small drops. Scouting is essential and portaging is easy, we generally portaged on the left.

The boulders open out somewhat to several steep grade 3+ chutes and rock gardens as you make your way down to the waterfalls. Scout the waterfalls on river left and get your camera ready. You can portage the first one on the left but must run the second drop. We ran the first one hard left and the second drop middle right. Watch out for eels while you are waiting for the others to runs the falls!

After the adrenalin is flowing you can calm down in the deep gorge preceding more grade 3+ rock gardens. A nice papa slide adds spice followed by more (open) rock gardens. The next feature is an elevated ledge on river right. It is an awesome sight but you need to back up and run the next rocky chute on river left going just to the right of another huge boulder.

Another half hour of grade 3 boulder gardens brings you to Papuni. Expect this "short" run to take from 3-5 hours depending on flows, skills etc. From Papuni, there is a short easy Grade 3 down to Puhoro (about 1 hour). This run is right next to the road most of the way. From Puhoro there is a grade 2-3 run to Erepeti Bridge which will take about 3 hours and has a couple of steeper rapids towards the end.

One of the reasons we suspect the Ruakituri is so seldom paddled, is its continued absence from *NZ White Water*. This description by Alan Bell may serve as a starter for an entry on this river in the 3rd edition.

**Photo 6:
Ruakituri
scenery. Photo:
Alan Bell**

Ruakituri scenery. Photo: Alan Bell

The Rangitikei River - In the Year 2050

Laura Nicol

An aging whitewater paddler and multisporter take their grandchildren for a trip up north. On the way they stop beside Lake Utiku. The grandfather says to the grandmother, "Do you remember your first paddle down the old river?" Grandmother replies with a whimsical look, "How could I forget, I thought the waves were at least 10 feet high and I was terrified". The grandchildren look up and wonder what the two old dears are talking about. Grandfather smiles as he remembers the good old days.

One grandchild says "What do you mean your first paddle?". Grandmother replies, "When I was young I used to whitewater kayak and this used to be a river. I had my first trip and swim down there somewhere." The child smiles and asks what happened to the river. Grandfather tells how the river became a lake due to a hydro electric scheme.

"Did you paddle this river Granddad?" asks one child. "Yes, it was when I was young and into multisport. A group of us often used to come up here and train. Some clubs used to organise a race on the river. They were so much fun. You would all paddle off down the river and have this wonderful sense of adventure. Even though you were racing you could still look at the great scenery and we all used to think how lucky we were to be able to do this sort of thing. I guess we took it for granted".

"Did nobody try and save the river?" asks the other child. Both the grandparents look slightly agitated.

"Yes, some people tried but it all costs money and in the end they just did not have enough. It happened so fast." says Grandma

"What did you do to stop it Granddad?"

"I was young and busy training. Gee, I hadn't even met your Grandmother let alone thought about having children. I had to work and when I wasn't doing that I was training. I guess I'm guilty of thinking someone else would look after that sort of stuff."

"Can you still paddle rivers Grandma?"

"They did manage to save some but what with the pressures of farming and electricity and with a growing population the rivers really suffered. You are still allowed to paddle the Waimak down south and some West Coast rivers in National Parks but they are so crowded and you need a permit. Its just not the same."

"Look Grandma there's a boat on the lake – I guess some people still have fun," says the child. Grandma and Granddad sigh and with a look of sadness they wander back to the car and continue their journey.

Maybe this is a picture of the future – let's hope not. Help prevent it from happening by supporting the NZRCA now. We are the one of the few organisations that specifically targets rivers for conservation and we are the only national organisation that looks after your recreational paddling environment.

Help us to conserve rivers – join today.

Letters

A Christmas Wish to Members of the NZCRA Executive

I want to send my best wishes to you all for your continuing efforts on behalf of the canoeing fraternity in New Zealand, and thought what better time than to send some greetings than at Christmas.

During this year I have had the pleasure of working with a number of you on various conservation and other issues. I have to say that New Zealand paddlers are very lucky to have such a dedicated group of individuals such as you prepared to spend time helping the canoeing fraternity. I have also been tremendously impressed with the skills, knowledge, dedication and efforts of many of you as you look after your portfolios within the Association and the work you have all been involved in throughout the year.

It's really great to see what you are all involved in and trying to do, for what at times must impinge severely on your own personal time and space. I for one really appreciate all your work and efforts and I am sure there are many other throughout the country who will wholeheartedly agree with me.

So may I wish you and your partners and families all a wonderful festive season and safe holidays wherever they may take you. I hope you all manage to enjoy some paddling or family time or holidays and relaxation somewhere so that you can recharge your batteries.

Doug Rankin

Highlights from the Rangitata River Water Conservation Order Hearing

Maree Baker

The Ministry for the Environment has not yet released its decision on whether or not it will recommend a Water Conservation Order, as a result of the hearing attended in November. In the meantime here are some highlights that illustrate the theme of our case. Hopefully we will have good news by the time the next newsletter goes to print.

Our case ranged from the experienced and personal - Doug Rankin when he said:

“The first time I boated on the Rangitata river was 30 years ago in 1971, when a friend, John Parsloe, took me on a trip from the Klondyke intake down to the Cracroft intake with about four other people. We were all paddling canvas canoes.”

To the technical - Linda Wesley:

“In the Rangitata Gorge section of the river the combination of river flow, gradient and narrowing of the river provide rapids that demand the use of ‘big water’ techniques to successfully manoeuvre. With an

increase in water level this ‘big water’ experience is increased. This section is an ideal introduction for students wanting to develop skills in paddling ‘big water’.

The numerical - the River Survey, Jon Hunt:

“The Rangitata Gorge is a nationally significant whitewater amenity, and the Waikari Station (Klondyke) to Peel Forest section is heavily used. Combined they represent a valuable resource for existing and future generations, worthy of protection from additional human interference.”

The recreational - Tussock:

“The Rangitata’s flows are generally very reliable for rafting and kayaking – it never becomes too low to navigate and only occasionally becomes too high. However, its character does change with its varying flows. At low water (40-75 cumecs), the river is clear, the pools are deep and slow, the rapids are steep and there are many rocks to dodge. At high water (130+ cumecs), the river is discoloured, the waves and holes become bigger, the drops wash out, many rocks become covered and the rapids become more continuous. The constantly fluctuating river flow means that no two trips are ever identical and is one of the reasons why many people enjoy running the river over and over again.”

And the legal/political/philosophical - Maree Baker:

“Indeed for kayakers and rafters, the knowledge that a river is flowing freely from source to sea, with no dams or significant obstructions, gives it an intrinsic value for us. As a country that uses a high proportion of hydroelectricity, many outstanding rivers in New Zealand no longer flow freely from source to sea, and this has a significant impact on the perception of the value of the remaining free flowing rivers. The fact this major river is still undammed, gives it an outstanding intrinsic value deserving of recognition and protection.”



Individual Membership Form

New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association
PO Box 284 Wellington
Phone: 04 560 3590
E-mail: nzrca@rivers.org.nz
Website: www.rivers.org.nz

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New Zealand Recreational Canoeing Association Inc.

Our purpose is to preserve New Zealand's whitewater resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

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The Editor would like to apologise for the Summer issue being a few weeks late (travelling and paddling overseas delayed me somewhat).

In our commitment to get this publication to you in a reliable fashion, we promise you will get the the Autumn issue on May 1st. The deadline for material is March 15, contact Polly on communication@rivers.org.nz

Thank you for your continued support