

All I want for Christmas ... is to keep our Wild Rivers free flowing



Whitewater NZ

Summer Issue 2009

09.3

New Zealand Canoeing

Summer Issue 2009
(09.3)

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About New Zealand Canoeing

New Zealand Canoeing is the official newsletter of Whitewater NZ Inc. *NZ Canoeing* is published quarterly and distributed free to around 1,000 members of the Whitewater NZ 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 Whitewater NZ.

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 contributors and advertisers and the myriad of e-mail correspondents for their contributions to this issue of *NZ Canoeing*. May the rivers flow for you!

All map references are to NZMS Infomap 260 Topographical series.

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Front Cover; Transport to A Wild River
by Michelle Wallace

Below: Wild River Day on the Waiohine River
by Mike Birch



NZRCA Executive & Officers

as elected at the NZRCA AGM April 2008

Patron

Hugh Canard
Christchurch
patron@rivers.org.nz

President

Polly Miller
Christchurch
president@rivers.org.nz

Vice-President

Duncan Catanach
Wellington
vice-president@rivers.org.nz

NI Conservation

Duncan Catanach
Wellington
conservation@rivers.org.nz

Conservation

Tony Ward-Holmes
Christchurch
conservation@rivers.org.nz

Safety

Matt Barker
Auckland
safety@rivers.org.nz

Education

Matt Barker
Auckland
education@rivers.org.nz

Access

Mike Birch
Masterton
access@rivers.org.nz

Treasurer

Simon Callaghan
Gore
treasurer@rivers.org.nz

Communications

Sophie Ballagh
Christchurch
communications@rivers.org.nz

Administration

Anne Smith
Wellington
admin@rivers.org.nz

Membership


Alan Bell
Wellington
membership@rivers.org.nz

NZ Canoeing Editor

Michelle Wallace
Hamilton
editor@rivers.org.nz

Webmaster

Jonathan Hunt
Christchurch
webmaster@rivers.org.nz



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Conservation News

Article by Tony Ward-Holmes

The last wee while has seen some resolution to many outstanding cases.

Hurunui River

The Special Tribunal has recommended a draft decision for the Water Conservation Order (WCO), applied for by Fish & Game and Whitewater NZ, be gazetted on the North Branch and main stem including Maori Gully. The South Branch is excluded from the recommendation, however it still receives some protection because the flows downstream in Maori Gully are part of what is to be protected there. The Hurunui Water Project (HWP) has since applied to build dams across both South Branch and Lake Sumner and is also applying for an adjournment in the WCO process. Whitewater NZ will be opposing the adjournment in court in December. In our view HWP is unlikely to succeed with any of their adjournment, appeal against the WCO decision, or consent applications.

The Matiri Hydro Scheme

This is a proposed dam across Lake Matiri, and would hold back some of the flood flows that form an important part of the Murchison kayaking amenity. The consent hearing has granted the consents to build the dams, however their decision reveals that they failed to consider Whitewater NZ's evidence on the effects on flood flows. Whitewater NZ has appealed the decision to Environment Court, where we think we have a strong case.

Mokihinui river

As many will have seen in the news in November, at a grey-power meeting in Nelson Gerry Bownlee let slip that the proposed Mokihinui River Dam will not go ahead. It is unlikely he has prior knowledge of what the consent hearing commissioners have decided, however it is not impossible that

he does have knowledge of what DOC have decided for the concession required to inundate conservation estate. Given that this would have been the largest inundation of conservation estate in NZ's history, and that there are good local alternatives with the Stockton Plateau and Arnold River projects with far less damaging effects, a decision not to grant the concession seems obvious.

Central Plains Water Hearing

Of great interest to multi-sport and down river races, the Central Plains Water (CPW) hearing recently released their decision for the water-take from the Waimakariri River. The original application was for up to 40 cumecs whenever available in the river. What has been granted is up to 25 cumecs, but with 1:1 flow sharing so the river will not be flat-lined at the minimum allowed flow, and a raised minimum allowed flow over summer and some other weekends. This is a very good win for kayakers who will now be far less effected by CPW's take.

Log Books!

There are many more threats on the horizon. Nobody is really sure what is happening with the proposed Kaituna hydro scheme, the Matakita hydro project is on hold but not forgotten, hydro companies have their eyes on the the Ngaruroro, Taipo, Waitaha and Nevis Rivers, and the irrigation proposals threaten the lower Rangitaiki, and the Waingawa River in Wairarapa, and the government is seeking to make some worrisome changes to the RMA and Conservation legislation. One thing you can do to help is to add your entry to logbooks and rivers throughout the country. Mick Hopkinson installed one at the take-out for the Middle Matakita River and it turned out to be an invaluable networking tool to make our case there. If you're passing by the Kayak School, check out the feedback to Network Tasman from 200 paddlers. Log books are in the Okere Falls store for the Kaituna River, Maori Gully take-out of the Hurunui River, Lower Matakita, Matiri, Mokau Rivers and maybe others. Please sign them, your rivers need your support.

Access News

The late October Mangahao River release was cancelled, well to be more accurate it wasn't cancelled but simply did not happen due to a fault in the floodgates. King Country Energy is working to make sure this does not happen again by testing the floodgates prior to all future releases, and Whitewater NZ is negotiating for another release in compensation.

Photos

Left: Hurunui day well supported, Andy Dennis



A Day On A Wild River

Article by Tony Ward-Holmes

Despite a tepid start to summer, skies cleared all around the country for a 'Day on a Wild River'.

Forrest and Bird's Marina Skinner reported "About 2000 people took part in 'Day on Wild River' fun events around New Zealand during the last weekend of November. The events—which included kayaking, rafting, fishing, nature walks and talks and kids' activities—showed the wonderful things to do on or beside wild rivers and why we should protect wild rivers from development. Recreational and environmental organisations that are involved with the wild rivers coalition organised the events on the Nevis, Orari, Hurunui, Matakaitaki, Clarence, Mikonui, Hutt, Waiohine and Mohaka Rivers."

Award for best attended must go to the Hutt River, 700 people gathering at Kaitoke park to splash around in rafts, have a bbq etc. 180 keen people made the trek to the Nevis River near Queenstown, one of the more isolated of the Wild Rivers Day venues, and kept the rafts and guides going non-stop all day to show them the river. The day made news in the Otago Daily Times. Whitewater NZ organised a trip on the Waiohine River and 50 rafters and kayakers took advantage of perfect weather and river flow. A story and photos featured on the front cover of the Wairarapa News.

A big pat on the back to Whitewater NZ Conservation Officer

Glenn Murdoch, who designed the Wild Rivers website, and to Forest & Bird's Debs Martin who is the one of the main instigators. Debs reported from the day on the Matakaitaki River:

"We were in Murchison over the weekend, and were right in the middle of the supposed weather bomb—it rained bucket loads in the morning, which brought out the blackfronted terns feeding, and the river up slightly—so we had an excellent rafting and



Hutt Valley Canoe Club member Paul Schofield shows Michael Bird how to kayak on the Hutt River at Kaitoke Regional Park. Photo by Marina Skinner Forrest and Bird

kayak trip down the river, with four rafts and a flotilla of kayaks! A highlight for me was West Coast/Tasman MP, Chris Auchinvolv, leaping into the river and floating down surrounded by a circle of kayaks and a raft staring down at him! Fish & Game were showing a few hardy souls how to cast, and then the sun came out for a spot of electric fishing. A successful BBQ at the Kayak School, and then Craig Pottton shared an amazing slide show of river stories around the world—120 people to listen!

Yesterday beamed sunshine on us and we had a great trip in the upper Matakaitaki River section—the walkers/trampers rendezvousing with the Nelson Canoe Club kayak/raft trip. They showed us some pretty stunning manoeuvres—and then had to rescue some kayaks and a paddle stuck in an eddy at Horse Terrace bridge! Lucky the swimmer got through. All in all, a fabulous weekend, and a great mix of people involved. "

Whitewater NZ patron Hugh Canard was tireless as usual on the Hurunui River: "Members of the Whitewater Canoe Club went up on Saturday and set up a slalom course at the Jollie Brook rapid near the swingbridge in what looked like the beginnings

river, boof, waterfall, sieve, huck, drop, paddle, rock, loop, cartwheel, air, naturer, float, explore, canoe, white water, buffer, travel, experience, rescue, slide, spin, ferry, attain, eddy, whirlpool, cataract, gorge, swim, blunt, kayak, fun, scout, hydraulic, play, portage, creek, slalom, grade, carve, inspire, power, pour-over, stroke, shoe, pit, donkey flip, helmet, race, wave, expedition, friends, lines, camping, throw-bag, movies, trips, adventures, knife, ecology, fitness, life, lateral, gate, underfoot, hike/jacket, carry, challenge, pour-over, competition, breath, crank, shuttle, mission, sunshine, precision, road-trip, events, prizes, tips, techniques, pin-drop, scal hunch,

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of a gale westerly. Sunday up the river was warm, breezy and brilliant, but Christchurch experienced a cold easterly something with lowering cloud. People with no imagination and those who wanted to watch the All Blacks vs France match stayed away, but around 9am on Sunday Fish and Game, Forest & Bird, Dambusters, and DoC started arriving and setting up tents and displays. St John's Ambulance and even the local policeman turned up. DoC did a Didymo demo, and there were some nature walks arranged for later in the day.

Russel Norman, co-leader of the Greens, and Brendon Burns, Christchurch Central electorate MP for Labour turned up and gave supportive short speeches to the crowd of over 100. F&B ran a sausage sizzle to raise funds and the WWCC has donated all the slalom entry fees to Dambusters. Fish & Game ran a fly fishing tutorial (or at least they tried to in the wind) and took MP Brendon Burns on a tour to show the relationships of the Hurunui lakes and river branches that are the subject of so much passion amongst the urban and the rural people that want to retain the natural values of the Hurunui River. The day ended with a mass paddle down the Hurunui River, including much gleeful viewing of the carnage at Devil's Fang Falls, a gift of the volatile and flashy South Branch to the river running community. This newly created Grade 3-4 rapid is the hardest drop on the whole river and is right by the road at Dozy Stream."

Dambusters protest Photo by Jonathan Hunt



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The Upper Waiau River

Whitewater NZ trials drive in access into one of our best multiday river trips.

Article by Polly Miller

Dropping into the Narrows I had a familiar learning experience... rapids that look so manageable from the cliff somehow morph once you're at river level. Surging through the first corner and straightening up to take on a buffer wave, I glanced behind me. Grant was upside down. Flying round the corner towards a drop I hadn't scouted and a second look confirmed my worst fears—Grant was in the drink. Swimmer! I yelled, and ducked as Southy's throwbag went over my head.

The Narrows is the crux of the Upper Waiau River, a two day trip in north Canterbury. Due to problems with access, in the past kayakers have had to fly in by helicopter (expensive due to the lack of local operators) or shoulder their kayaks and overnight gear and walk over Malings Pass to the put in. St James' station was bought by the crown in 2008, and due almost entirely to the tireless efforts of Hugh Canard on behalf of Whitewater NZ, we were trialling a drive in trip with the blessing of the Department of Conservation. By taking a DOC official on the trip, we intended to show her how we are low impact, responsible recreationalists, and also share the outstanding character of the river with someone from the Department. Having an epic on the river was something we were naturally keen to avoid.

Trip planning started months in advance, with Hugh wrestling with a range of logistics, lining up enough 4WDs, thinking through how to ensure that we were didymo free, with a complement of rafts and kayaks and the all important people who selflessly agreed to drive the shuttle. Southy, who runs Hidden Valleys, improved my life enormously a couple of weeks before the trip, by agreeing to come along. Grant South is one of New Zealand's most experience raft guides, and he'd rafted the river recently. We breathed a collective sigh of relief at the addition of his expertise and enthusiasm to the trip.

The week before the trip approached Hugh's emails developed a slightly frenzied edge. Fish and Game were organising a goose cull in the Waiau River for the weekend, so we asked them nicely not to shoot us. DOC said we needed to spray the vehicles as we went over Malings pass, to avoid transporting didymo and weeds from the Clarence valley into the Waiau River, and with the good will of their employees we made this possible.

We met in Hamner on the Friday night of Labour weekend. Like any spring trip, the weather was one aspect Hugh couldn't

control. I was relieved to see that the snow that had been forecast had cleared, and the short window between two southerly storms had magically appeared, promising a lovely medium flow. There were 30 of us, including four rafts, eighteen kayakers, and one brave DOC employee. Various complicated discussions about vehicles commenced and we all agreed to spring out of the morning and be gone by 8am.

The drive to the put in was spectacular, we ogled the Upper Clarence River as we drove up the valley, and had plenty of time to enjoy the view of snow on the tops of Mt Una and the Spenser mountains as the 4WDs slowly made their way over a road that would definitely been the end of Ben's van. We spread ourselves liberally over the river flats as we contemplated fitting large quantities of overnight gear into rafts and kayaks and I found myself sweltering in my drysuit—I'd packed for southerly cold not bright sunshine. The first couple of hours is a flat braided section through the upper Waiau Valley—with a view of the St James Walkway and the snowy main divide above open high country farmland. DOC plans to restore the upper valley to its original scrub and forest, which will make the Waiau particularly special.

After a wee nap on a river bank waiting for rafts, we dropped into the first boulder garden and the fun began. Kilometres of fantastic class 3+ was kayaking heaven, and most of the boaters left the rafts behind. "Good honest rafting" said Southy as I reflected on the challenges of keeping rafts moving in technical water, and we both looked upstream to where Ian had once again wrapped his raft on a rock. The first gorge provided the biggest challenge of the day, and teams made conservative decisions. Watching Hugh line his raft around the first move, I was grateful that we had an experienced group who knew their limits.

The river opened up again, but the class three rapids just kept going. I remembered a bit more about signalling to rafts—they can take on holes that any class three kayaker would be keen to avoid—and Jon and I bounced over small pourovers, refreshing rusty kayaking skills and practicing baby boof strokes. The second gorge proved equally spectacular, and I thought I could be in northern California, at the bottom of a deep canyon surrounded by dry rugged countryside. We rounded the last corner in the gorge to see the rest of the team had set up camp on a grassy river flat on the river left. With a glass of wine in hand, sitting in a group around the fire I looked at the smiles—we'd all had an exceptional day out.

Next morning the sun reached the campsite early and warmed

the frost on the boats. In no hurry to put on in the cold, we enjoyed a gentle start, drinking coffee and drying out tents. With the promise of the mighty Narrows an hour from camp, we put on to more fantastic class three boulder gardens, with a little more water from some big tributaries, making the rafting more straightforward. Getting out above the Narrows, I was initially unworried about the challenge presented—until of course I found myself in the gorge, where this story started. The Narrows is a 500m long class four section, where 70 or so cumecs is pushed through a series of very narrow gorges. Hugh knows how narrow—he ran his 3.3m cataraft sideways through a 3m gap. After a few nervous moments, the ends of the raft folded and the raft kept going.

With such a big team, it was good to see a number of kayakers wisely chose to take on the considerable effort of portaging, and the rest of the kayak team got down without trouble. While Rob and I chased Grant's boat, Southy put him in the raft and bounced down behind us. Alas, Southy's best advice wasn't enough for the recreational rafters; Doug took a couple of dunkings and Ian's crew took on the biggest swim, as their raft wrapped on a choke stone two thirds of the way down the gorge. John and Barry got out their rescue kit and spent time unwrapping the boat, as the rest of the team convened downstream, warming up with lunch in the sun. It took another 40 minutes after all the rafts had been reunited for the portaging crew to arrive, and we put back on cheerful in the knowledge that everyone had made it down safely.

Hours of more bouncy class two and three water continued all the way to the confluence with the Hope, and our first view of the road. Paddling through the small gorges with glimpses of the mountains behind, Doug and I concluded that the Upper Waiau River is a unique trip in New Zealand—and internationally. The landscape is spectacular, and the river's best and most special aspect for kayaking

is the continuous nature of the paddling.

We expect to hear from the Department of Conservation about whether we can have drive in access over Malings Pass when they confirm the St James Management Plan on 1 July 2010. We hope to have discussions between now and then to agree conditions for access, to ensure that we contribute to keeping the upper river free of didymo and weeds. It's likely that continued access will rely on

kayakers taking responsibility and keeping to the conditions—we trust that everyone will do what's needed to protect any negotiated access to this amazing trip! For details keep your eye on www.rivers.org.nz

*Photos courtesy of
Shane Davidson*



What Is A River Worth?

Article by Jeremy Watt

With the growing debate and the impending head-on collision between the government endorsed corporate push to dam New Zealand's rivers and the groups that are campaigning for wild and free rivers, I believe that it is timely that we consider what monetary value these rivers have to the corporate machine and whether we, the New Zealand public, realise that value through development.

This article highlights why there is so much pressure to develop hydro resources compared to other, renewable, sources. The governments Proposed National Policy Statement on Renewable Energy Generation defines "Renewable electricity generation" as "generation of electricity from solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, biomass, tidal, wave, or ocean currents resources."

Gerry Bownlee in "Unlocking New Zealand's Energy and Resources Potential" (2009) said, "The Government wants investment in new electricity generation to occur on the basis of sound economics, rather than through ruling out particular options on the basis of ideology." 'Some' may consider this an honourable approach and so, to 'some' I address this article.

If hydro and the rivers are renewable, then we must be able to renew them... So without going into the 'ideology' of wild and free rivers, what do we know?

The Energy Landscape

In 2008 NZ's installed electricity capacity is 9380MW for a total consumption of 38,862 GWh. That's an average per capita rate of ~9000kWh per annum. It is expected that electricity consumption will grow at 1.3% pa til 2025, which would extrapolate to 48404 GWh by 2025.

The Energy Efficiency Conversation Strategy 2007 (EECS) sets the admirable goal of 90% renewables by 2025. Currently we sit around 65%. In order to achieve this using their own projections we will need to shut down the equivalent of Huntly and increase generation via 'renewables' to cover this loss and the projected increase in demand.

The Hydro equation-So why is it so popular?

If one looks into the economics of hydro it becomes a relative no-brainer for corporates to set their sights on hydro. There is a considerable upfront cost, which they are more than happy to raise as a burden that they so altruistically bear, but after this the operating costs are negligible. Macquarie Research in a June 2007 report estimates annual Operating & Maintenance cost of \$11.30 p/kW for hydro assets. When considered alongside a zero cost for the 'fuel' and RMA charges well under \$100k (Environment Bay of Plenty RMA Section 36 Charges), makes for some pretty easy decisions in the boardroom.

With the average cost of 14.18 c/kWh to the consumer (20 c/kWh for residential, 5.77 c/kWh for Basic Non-ferrous metals industry, e.g. Tiwai) the numbers start to stack up. It is also wise to consider that recent government documents quote a resource cost for hydro of 8 c/kWh. That means that consumers subsidise Tiwai electricity around 2 c/kWh for the 15% of New Zealand's electricity that they use.

Meridian Energy in their Annual Report 2009 declared an installed hydro capacity of 2453 MW. Using Macquarie's figures for maintenance that would amount to under \$34 million for 11721GWh generated. Multiply that by the average c/kWh, and over 1.6 billion dollars of revenue is created for the nominal cost of production in the vicinity of \$35m. Obviously there are other cost associated: cost of capital investment, human resource, etc, however, in light of the economics it is not hard to see why hydro is the go to for electricity generators.

What is currently omitted from this model?

The economics that make hydro so appealing to corporates fail to recognise quite an important component, and it's not



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ideological: responsibilities under the RMA.

Resource Consents are issued for the use of our resources and are finite, i.e. they expire. Currently there is no consideration given to this aspect by consenting authorities, which skews the economics of hydro. While an authority may decide that it is acceptable to inundate a portion of a river, they can only do so for a specified period. So what happens when that period comes to an end?

This is an area where looking at local examples can not provide much material as we haven't had to decommission anything large scale yet because our dams are relatively young. However, if we look to the US we can see that there is a cost, and a large one at that, in returning the river to its 'original' state. We could start to argue that the river will never be returned to its original state but for the purposes of this article we will assume that this is possible.

In the States there are a number of examples of dams being decommissioned, or where cost projections have been made and you will be hard pressed to find an example that doesn't run into the tens or hundreds of millions of US dollars. Milltown Dam, MT, was recently decommissioned for an estimated cost of 100 million US dollars. The estimate for removal and restoration of the Klamath, California dams is hundreds of millions. There are plenty more examples and I encourage readers to look further as it makes interesting reading.

Who shoulders these costs? The owners of the dams. That

sounds fair, does it not? Now we must remember that Meridian Energy, Genesis Energy & Mighty River Power are all State Owned Enterprises and in theory their profit, and liabilities, are ours. So we should be very concerned that we are rushing head long into the building of dams for 'cheap', 'clean' electricity when the models omit such a massive cost. It might also be wise to consider that a private limited liability company could go bust and the cost fall to us even after a long period of profits being extracted for private gains.

What can be done to address the issue?

The RMA contains provision (Section 108A) that can require the consent holder to provide a bond to 'secure performance of conditions'. If we are to fairly assess the economics of hydro the cost of removal, and renewal, must be included from the start. By requiring a bond to cover the cost this work would mean that true economic decisions could be made. In this situation we will find that the cost of hydro is comparable with alternatives such as wind and therefore we might also hope that rivers will not suffer the level of pressure that they currently do.

Is it worth it?

Consider who uses the lion's share of our electricity, the prices that they pay for that share, and the rhetoric of government and big industry, and ask yourself, are we, the people of New Zealand, really getting the benefit from the sacrifice we have made? Or are about to make by drowning a river?

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Releases and Events

Releases

Wairoa River Release from McLaren Falls

20 December 2009	10am - 4pm
27 December 2009	10am - 4pm
3 January 2010	10am - 4pm
10 January 2010	10am - 4pm
17 January 2010	10am - 4pm
24 January 2010	10am - 4pm
01 February 2010	10am - 4pm

Piripaua River releases

13 December 2009 9am - 3pm downstream



Events

Christmas at Kaituna 19 December 2009
NZ Slalom Open & Mass-de-boat 30 January 2010 9am
NZ Slalom Open & Mass-de-boat 31 January 2010 9am

Please refer to our website (rivers.org.nz/events/) for the latest release schedules, including flow information.



Wild Rivers Day on Kaituna.

Right: Andrew Blackford emerges from a drop on Awesome Gorge. Photo by Sinan Tanilkan

Left: Preparing for the 40 min walk out, an easy one on Westcoast standards! Photo by Michelle Wallace

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