



Whitewater NZ

Autumn Issue 2010

10.1

New Zealand Canoeing

The

Black-er Issue 2010



**Mokihinui River
- To Be Dammed -**

Black Issue in October 2008 - Blacker Issue 2010

NZ rivers are under threat as never before

With the announcement of the 80m high dam on the Mokihinui River in March - Kayaking needs your help!

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;

Steffan Lamont on the Lake Perrine outlet rapid, Mokihini River. An irony about damming the Mokihini is that Lake Perrine at the head of the main-stem is named after Perrine Moncrief, founder of Forest & Bird."

Photo by Tony Ward-Homes.

Below

Safety in action on the Arabura. By Michelle Wallace



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as elected at the NZRCA AGM April 2008

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Conservation



Robin Rutter-Baumann on the Mokihinui River. Photo by Tony Ward-Holmes

By Glenn Murdoch and Tony Ward-Holmes.

Well, what can we say? These words are being written after the worst few days for NZ kayaking since Lake Dunstan was filled in the early 90s. It started off with the National Government passing, under urgency in the final sitting before the Easter holiday, the Environment Canterbury (Temporary Commissioners and Improved Water Management) Bill into law. The bill included a clause that effectively threw the Hurunui WCO into the rubbish bin. Then on the first day back after the holiday, it was announced that consents would be granted for Meridian Energy's application to build a dam that inundates the pristine Mokihinui River, north of Westport.

These two events, even taken individually, are a massive blows to our ongoing struggle to preserve our remaining whitewater resources. Our current Government appears hell-bent on doing whatever it takes to allow developers to take advantage of our rivers, not to mention the rest of the conservation estate, for short-term economic gain. For a great overview of some of the issues, albeit already out of date, check out the article "Cry me a river" by Mike White in the April issue of North and South magazine. His second sentence "An ugly room, a scattering of people, the fate of a river" says it all really. And with the current competition for water, loosening of regulation, and scramble for growth at all costs, the decisions made in many

WWCC take action against at the Mokihinui Dam hearing in 2009



Photo by Robin Rutter-Baumann

of these hearings are not in favour of rivers.

Speaking of growth, one thing we've never understood is why growth is measured in things like number of TVs per capita and how much uranium can be hacked out of a mountainside. How about growth in number of swimming holes? Growth in number of cities with clean air? Growth of fish stocks? Growth in opportunities for wild adventures? Growth in number of clean rivers? Tourists to this country often ask if they can drink the tap-water. They don't even think to ask if they can drink out of rivers. We can still drink out of many rivers, but from an ever-reducing number.



The Mokihinui River by Tony Ward-Holmes

Mokihinui Dam

We fought long and hard. The Commissioners listened to us, that much is evident in their decision, but they ignored us. To quote them, "With respect to the loss of white water recreation opportunities, we acknowledge that the impacts on river rafting and kayaking cannot be mitigated. Nevertheless we have not given this much weighting. This is a s.7(c) matter and, in having regard to it, we found there would be a net positive effect on recreation since the evidence presented to us showed that the proposal would provide a more diverse range of opportunities to a much wider group of people."

This decision was despite the Commissioners clearly stating that they considered the loss of the river to kayakers to be a significant effect. The Commissioners have decided that the loss of the river to kayakers doesn't matter, because the added recreational opportunities in the form of mountain biking, day walking, jet boating, lake fishing and sea kayaking on the lake more than compensate the community at large. By the same logic, an application to build a gondola, rotating restaurant and convention centre on the top of Mt Cook would fly through the consent process, no problem.

Just down the road it is worth mentioning the Stockton Plateau

Hydro Scheme, which had previously been granted consent. Stockton is a very different animal from the Mokihinui, it is probably the greenest, most sustainable and most efficient hydro-project ever proposed in this country. As well as generating a lot of power from a very small amount of water, it would also clean up the Ngakawau River by diverting all the mining run-off from the plateau. Their application for consent was supported by Whitewater NZ, Forest & Bird, the local chapter of the Green Party and many other organisations. Along with the Arnold, it would supply all the power required by West Coast and makes a mockery of Meridian's business case for the Mokihinui. But the latest news is.. the decision to grant Stockton has now

been appealed by Solid Energy. In a classic piece of Orwellian



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doublethink, Solid Energy's reasoning is that the hydro-project may one day (they're not sure how or when, but maybe one day) interfere with Solid Energy's mining on the same plateau, and thus would constitute an unsustainable use of water. It would be funny were it not that Solid Energy is an SOE and so their appeal bills are in effect footed by the taxpayer.

Canterbury Water Conservation Orders

The Government used a review of ECan, initiated and executed by farming interests, as an excuse to pass the Environment Canterbury (Temporary Commissioners and Improved Water Management) Bill. The government, in a move described as 'a disgrace', then took the opportunity to slip in a section which changes the rules for the Hurunui Water Conservation Order, and any future application to amend any other existing WCOs such as the Rangitata and Rakaia. This was despite the fact that the WCOs have never had anything to do with ECan or its Councillors. WCOs are a national process, for rivers of national significance, and no WCO has ever been decided by a regional authority.

The Act does two things to WCO's in Canterbury:

1. It changes the legal test used to consider whether or not a WCO should be awarded to a river. The previous, robust legal test has been replaced by a test which, in effect, gives equal importance to the benefits of dairy farming and irrigation. What we now have in Canterbury is a "Water Multi-Use Order", not a Water Conservation Order.
2. It removes our right of appeal and cross-examination. If

expert evidence that is incorrect or misleading is used to support the declining of a WCO, we have no ability to appeal it, or cross-examine witnesses, except on points of law.

In the case of the Hurunui WCO, the government has decided the legislation will apply immediately and the recommendation already made by the Special Tribunal to grant the WCO will be disregarded.

While this new law only affects Canterbury at the moment, we have no reason to believe that this will remain the case. We expect that this law, unless we can get it repealed, will eventually be rolled out across the country. This is the first step in abolishing WCO's completely.

What Can We Do?

Whitewater NZ has appealed the Mokihinui Decision to Environment Court. We have court cases likely on other rivers, and have a couple of important projects in the pipeline to help fight these battles. This will take support and money. The best two things that any paddler can do right now are

1. Join Whitewater NZ as an individual... even if you are already a member via an affiliated club. Donations are very welcome too of course! Just click the Donate button on www.rivers.org.nz
2. Get informed and get involved. Write letters to your MPs and newspaper editors, protest, make yourself heard.

For the Canterbury Water Conservation Orders:

3. We urgently need bring political pressure onto the National Caucus. Follow the link on the front page of the Wild Rivers website, www.wildrivers.org.nz and use the draft letter to send to the MP's listed.
4. Go to www.ourwaterourvote.org.nz, register as a supporter and check the Events tab for actions to support.

For the Canterbury WCO's, our only chance to change this law is to bring political pressure onto the National Caucus. Follow the link on the front page of the Wild Rivers website, www.wildrivers.org.nz and use the draft letter to send to the MP's listed.

One last thing

Rust, and developers, never sleep. The Matakaitaki may be the next major battle. With submissions from over 200 kayakers on Network Tasman's pre-feasibility study, a shot has been put across Network Tasman's bows. But the battle for the Matakaitaki hasn't really started yet. We have been told that river level gauges have been installed on the Matakaitaki.

As Mick Hopkinson said at Bullerfest, maybe the day will come where people who care about rivers can no longer let their fate be decided by a scattering of people in ugly rooms.

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Hurunui

Article written by Polly Miller, President, Whitewater NZ

On my first time down Maori Gully I paused above the second rapid looking anxiously downstream for anything that might cause difficulties for a beginner in an old plastic reflex. A friend gave me a dark look as he paddled by, saying; “keep right here, this is Simon’s hole.” From the safety of the eddy on river right I looked across at a ferocious feature which looked like certain death and asked “why is it called Simon’s hole?”
“Because Simon is still in it.”

The Hurunui River is the site of many stories of paddling adventures, ranging from the exhilaration of a first whitewater roll to epic tales of what happens when the river peaks in flood at several hundred cumecs. Within a couple of hours drive from Christchurch, it’s the playground of many aspiring and expert kayakers, used by schools, clubs, friends, families, polytech students out rafting and river buggers (their name not mine). With a range of paddling sections ranging from class I-III+ in the Canterbury high country its beautiful sub alpine setting makes it the perfect escape for a day or a week out of town.

It’s also a favourite spot for fishing. While kayakers have a very respectful relationship with the anglers on the river, I didn’t understand quite how special it is until we organised our Wild Rivers day on the Hurunui. People on long waders and very intense expressions explained that the upper Hurunui is one of the best places for trout in New Zealand, and the stretch below Lake Sumner is particularly special.

Because of its truly outstanding character, Whitewater NZ together with Fish & Game, applied for a Water Conservation Order (WCO) to protect the Hurunui.

Water – particularly for irrigation – is a hot political issue in Canterbury. The Department of Conservation, Ngai Tahu, Fish & Game and Forest and Bird all supported the WCO, however organisations such as the Hurunui Water Project, the Hurunui District Council, Meridian Energy and Trust Power opposed the WCO. Our application for the WCO did not mean that farmers



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and other users cannot apply to take some water from the river – we just wanted to prevent them from building dams. Dams will destroy the wild and scenic character of the river, which makes the Hurunui so special for kayaking.

The WCO was recommended by a Special Tribunal and their decision was appealed. The WCO was due to be decided in the Environment Court in May.

In the biggest legislative change relating to water since the Resource Management Act (1991). The Environment Canterbury (Temporary Commissioners and Improved Water Management) Act (2010) changed the political landscape in Canterbury and we're faced with the prospect that the weakening of Water Conservation Orders (WCOs) will mean that not only will irrigation interests be able to destroy the Hurunui River but that this is the blue print for future changes planned by the Government.

John Key is on the record as saying he intended to "remove the regulatory roadblocks to irrigation in Canterbury" and this is how he's done it. South of Wellington, the rhetoric is becoming martial. Described as a war over water, the drivers to enclose and privatise water are similar to the mechanisms used to exploit and intensify land use on the Canterbury plains in the 1990s.

I've listened to a variety of people try and understand why the new legislation was introduced and passed under urgency, and why the Land and Water Forum – the Government appointed body set up to develop policy on water in New Zealand – was kept in the dark. Instead of the Government seeking a consensus through their own established process and representatives, this legislation appears to have sprung from lobbying from development interests and representations from the regions' Mayors. Water means money and a lot of Queen St lawyers own patches of land in Canterbury.

The consequences for river conservation are dramatic – hundreds of thousands of dollars and uncounted hours of time have been lost for the Hurunui River alone. Protection for the Hurunui River has been down graded to the level of a Regional Plan, and the future of the Rakaia and the Rangitata rivers are also under threat.

Parliament is sovereign and we're no longer going to court to protect the Hurunui in May. We're faced with the unfortunate choice – do we put more energy and resources into applying for what has been described as a "Water Multi-use Order" the weakened WCO under the new legislation, or do we go into bat to protect the river through the normal resource consent process. The Hurunui Water Project have applied for resource consent to dam the Hurunui, and the process for consents has not been changed. Appeals are heard in the Environment Court, with the right to cross examine witnesses. While going to court is expensive, appealing resource consent processes may be our best chance of preserving the Hurunui.

These dramatic changes pose challenges for Whitewater NZ, and they are also an opportunity. While I confess I've completely lost control of my email inbox as yet another outraged person hits "reply to all" and lets their contacts know their views, I've never seen kayakers this motivated or interested in getting involved. Kayakers have been getting in touch asking how they can help, offering to donate money and time, attending meetings to discuss ideas with other groups, and writing letters to their MPs. We need to capture this energy and take this opportunity to make Whitewater NZ better able to represent paddlers – by building the number of individual members, by improving our communication with members, and by developing our keen volunteer advocates who spend their precious time to help us save rivers. Thank you for your continued support.

*Photos: Opposite page - Maori Gully on the Hurunui river
Left: View up the Hurunui River courtesy of Forrest & Bird*

Rock Snot not the only pest to look out for in our rivers

Article and photos supplied by Auckland Regional Council

The dreaded didymo is not the only pest to watch out for in the waterways this summer.

Other freshwater nasties are out there, and everyone out in a kayak or canoe is a vital part in the fight against pests like oxygen weed, alligator weed, hornwort, koi carp and mosquito fish.

Didymo, known as rock snot, has still not been detected in the North Island, but these other pests affect many of our waterways and can be devastating to freshwater ecosystems.

Like didymo, aquatic pest plants are hitchhikers and can be easily spread when plant fragments are carried on kayaks and canoes, trailers and other equipment.

Pest fish can also be spread when juvenile fish or fish eggs are carried on unwashed gear.

As well as spoiling the look of our lakes and rivers, freshwater pests can crowd out native species, downgrade water quality, and block irrigation and drainage systems. They can also limit access to waterways for recreation.


It is simple to help stop their spread and if people Check, Clean, Dry between waterways, they will help prevent the spread of didymo and other pests and keep our waterways clean.

An easy way to clean a kayak or canoe is to scrub the exterior, then fill it with biodegradable detergent and water to wash the inside. Small items and gear can be cleaned in this solution as well.

If you can't wash your gear, you can leave it to dry completely for 48 hours, or restrict your use to a single waterway.

The Check, Clean, Dry campaign is an initiative introduced and funded by MAF Biosecurity New Zealand to work with the community to prevent the incursion and spread of didymo and other freshwater pests that can damage New Zealand's waterways.

For more information on the Check Clean Dry campaign visit www.biosecurity.govt.nz



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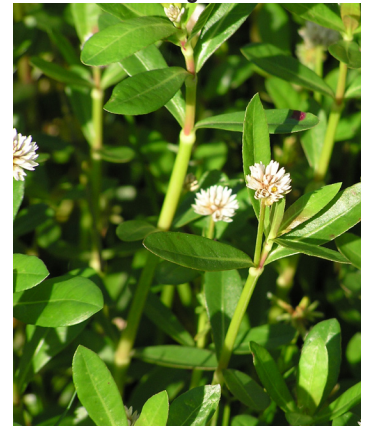
Below: Didymo or "Rock Snot"



Below: Hornwort



Below:- Alligator Weed





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Your Contributions

Whitewater NZ is dedicated to preserving NZ rivers. Through membership support and donations Whitewater NZ is able to make a difference and fight for rivers to remain, on the behalf of all kayakers who take to rivers in this country. As you have read throughout the recent editions, there is constant pressure on rivers, enforcing the need for Whitewater NZ to represent those who enjoy them.

This year we have had excellent support through clubs, organisations, business' and individuals, both financially and through active support for New Zealand rivers under threat.

Last year Mick Hopkinson announced that he would donate 10% of each boat sale to Whitewater NZ. This along with Mick's ongoing support, and kayaking wisdom has been an asset to saving New Zealand rivers.

This year Josh Nielson completed a film of his extreme adventures, kayaking around the world, which had showings in New Plymouth and Wellington. The proceeds nominated to go towards Whitewater NZ. Check out the website for more information: www.whitewater-koa.blogspot.com
Many thanks to the clubs that have donated significant dona-

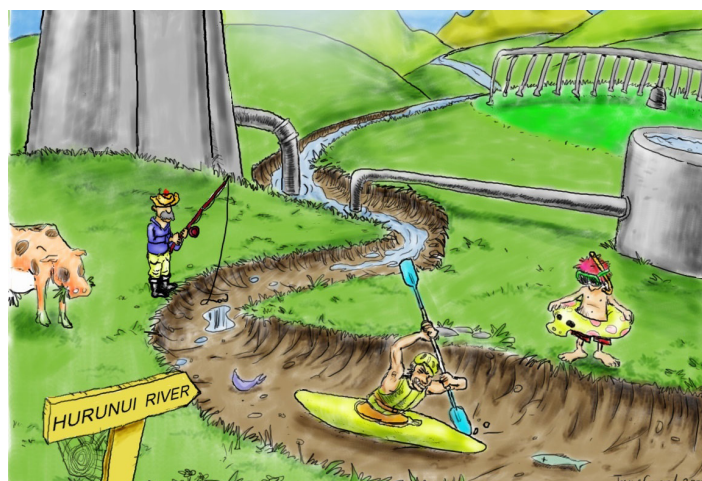
tions and time; University of Canterbury Canoe Club, Nelson Canoe Club, River City Canoe Club, Arawa Canoe Club, OCKC, and anyone missed due to donations after this edition has gone to print.

A special thanks to White Water Canoe Club for regular annual support and a very considerable amount for the Hurunui.

And lastly, thanks to the many individuals who have made contributions, some in cash but also in many other forms such as time, expertise, use of images or video, editing, printing, and innumerable hours spent representing kayakers in various hearings, meetings and forums.

Cartoon below by Jamie Canard.

The Hurunui River - commercialised



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Releases

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Mangahao Release
22 May 2010 10am - 4pm

Piripaua River releases
22 August 2010 9am - 3pm

Whakapapa River Release
4 September 2010 8am - 4pm
25 September 2010 8am - 4pm

Tongiriro River Release
18 - 19 September 2010 8am - 4pm



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

Photos by Mark Thomas: Terry Lasenby (top) and Stu Daniel (bottom) style the Roller Coaster, Wairoa River release.

Want to make a donation?

You can use the form below to join Whitewater NZ and make a donation which will go towards preserving rivers you enjoy for tomorrow

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Individual Membership \$30.00

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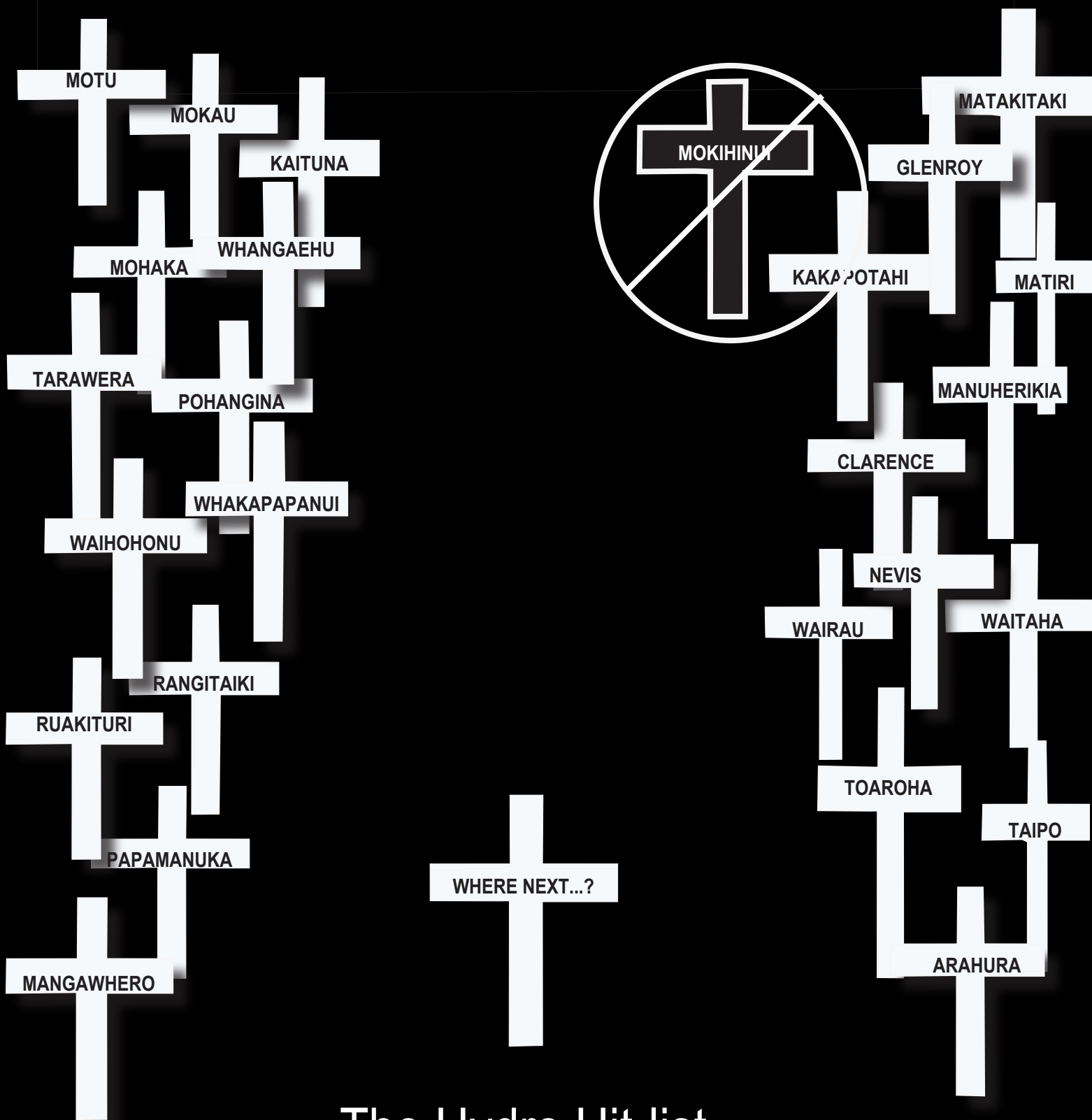
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Our purpose is to preserve New Zealand's White Water resources and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.

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The Black-er Issue 2010



The Hydro Hit-list

All found in recent electricity industry documents