



New Zealand Canoeing

In this issue...

About NZ Canoeing	2
Too precious to dam	3
Lessons from Mangetepopo	6
Conservation News	8
Releases and Events	9
Highlights	10

We thought we would try something new this time around and do all those lovely paddling photos the justice of colour. Do tell us what you think: editor@rivers.org.nz.

This issue includes adventures from Thailand and the States as well as an update on all the conservation happenings. Mick Hopkinson gives us his views on the Mangatepopo Coroner's Report and Polly Miller recounts the Mokihinui trip.

Enjoy.
Miriam

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 1,200 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 Info-map 260 Topographical series.

Unless otherwise noted all material in *NZ Canoeing* is © Whitewater NZ. All rights reserved.

Front Cover;
Toni George on Tard Luang,
Photo by Tyler Fox

NZRCA Executive & Officers

as elected at the NZRCA AGM July 2010

Patron

Hugh Canard
Christchurch
patron@rivers.org.nz

President

Polly Miller
Christchurch
president@rivers.org.nz

Vice-President

Graeme Wilson
Christchurch
vice-president@rivers.org.nz

NI Conservation

Nick Clendon
Wellington
conservation@rivers.org.nz

Conservation

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

Safety

Dave Annear
Wellington
safety@rivers.org.nz

Education

Matt Barker
Auckland
education@rivers.org.nz

Access

Mike Birch
Masterton
access@rivers.org.nz

Treasurer

Sarah Fawcett
Christchurch
treasurer@rivers.org.nz

Communications

Mike Birch
Masterton
communications@rivers.org.nz

Administration

Jo Mair
Christchurch
admin@rivers.org.nz

Membership

Jo Dovey
Wellington
membership@rivers.org.nz

NZ Canoeing Editor

Miriam Odlin
Rotorua
editor@rivers.org.nz

Webmaster

Jonathan Hunt
Christchurch
webmaster@rivers.org.nz



View the 2010/11 range on the [paddle-power website](http://paddle-power.com)
Available through dealers New Zealand-wide

www.paddle-power.com

Palm
Kayaks

sweet protection

Riot
Kayaks

... & lots more
quality gear and
safety equipment

Paddler: Andi Uhl. Location: Fantasy Falls. Photo: Paul Currant

Too precious to dam

By Polly Miller

Sometimes paddling trips go like clockwork. It seemed most unlikely that the 123 person descent of the Mokihinui River over Labour weekend would be that straightforward. For months in advance, Hugh Canard and his organising committee from Forest and Bird and Whitewater NZ tirelessly emailed, wrote letters and rang people. Rafts came from River Valley in the north and Hidden Valleys in the south. Members of Parliament and media people from the Nelson Mail, the Press and TV3 came along for the ride.

The Mokihinui is a wilderness river north of Westport and the West Coast Regional Council's decision to allow it to be dammed marks a watershed moment for New Zealand's environment. The objective of the trip was to highlight the importance of the river, give this diverse group an opportunity to be part of a journey down the Mokihinui, and let the river speak to them.

Meridian Energy have been given consent to build an 85 metre high dam on the river, which will destroy more than 330 hectares of river gorge and virgin native forest under a 14 kilometre long artificial lake. One of the most sobering statements at the Resource Consent Hearing was the opening paragraph by legal counsel for the Department of Conservation who stated: "The Mokihinui hydro scheme is the largest scale proposed flooding of public conservation land in New Zealand since the Manapouri scheme of the late 1960s and early 1970s."

The Mokihinui Hydro-Electric Project is also unnecessary. With the granting of consents for both the Dobson scheme on the Arnold River, and the Stockton Plateau scheme at Ngakawau, the Mokihinui need not be dammed. The combined output of the Dobson and Stockton schemes will supply all of the West Coast's electricity needs, with a surplus.

The logistics were alarming and made my head hurt. Three helicopters, \$25,000 worth of flying time, ten rafts, more than 60 kayakers, two put in locations (the forks and the north fork), nets to be loaded and gear to be flown out from a tramping party of enthusiastic Forest and Bird conservationists who'd walked in the day before and jumped on a raft to paddle home.

Hugh's sense of humour and diplomatic approach survived a number of challenges. At 6.15 a.m. he arrived at

the take out, to find a small tent city of sleepy paddlers. Striding through the campsite, he said, "this is the Civil Aviation Authority, and you are all camped illegally in a landing area." Leaping out of bed we eyed the inversion layer, which was trying to drizzle. No chance of anyone landing in this, we muttered as we filled nets and blinked at the TV3 journalist, who happily was from Hokitika and understood about early starts and whirly birds.

At two minutes to seven we heard the choppers coming and went from busy to frantic as the two 500s and one 700 landed in the small level area we were all sleeping in a few moments before. I watched one whirlybird lift two sling loads of seven boats and one raft apiece and reflected that our loading struggles might mean I would be rafting from the forks rather than paddling from the Johnston confluence as my boat appeared to be right on the edge of a precarious load.

The peace at the put in for the north fork returned my ears to normal and as the bird song resumed we discovered that the plethora of split paddles, first aid kits and EPIRBs were more than enough for a group of fourteen. Splitting into three groups, we sat down on a rock and gave the first two groups time to get underway as we appreciated the view.

Putting on the river at 8.30 a.m. was a new experience, it's a time when normally lazy kayakers are just rolling out of bed. We woke up pretty quickly as we dropped into the first tight class IV gorge and Matty got out in front. Hey diddle diddle and we were off down the middle, eddy hopping our way through beautiful limestone boulders on water the same colour as Tanqueray gin.

At our first patch of sun in the gorge I got out to let some



The team at the put in, Photo by Ian Trafford

of the early morning coffee take its natural course, and the team stretched on the rocks. With Matty, Mike and James all planning to overnight at the hut at the forks, we were in no hurry to race through paradise.

The north fork of the Mokihinui is indeed what it says on the tin. 7km of fantastic tight class III-IV, with a short 500m break in the middle where the river widens between two gorges. We had a flow on the low side of medium-perfect for the size of the team and considering that this run was for many the first of the season. With that flow and on that day it was possible to do the run without hopping out of your kayak – except to walk back up and run the perfect boof in the middle of the river just one more time.

As the river approached the forks the gradient mellowed, the hills dropped away and a huge open expanse reminiscent of the earthquake lakes on the Karamea River opened up. Drowned trees made weird shapes in the river and the first of the lush podocarp forest appeared as we descended below the beech trees. It takes almost 2km to reach the forks of the Mokihinui, and we could see the horizon line of the first rapid on the forks run as we made an eddy on the left and spotted the boys dry bag full of food, thoughtfully left by Sarah on the beach.

We draped our dry suits out in the sun and made up for not having much breakfast, noting that the members of the north fork team we'd asked to wait for us appeared to have disappeared downstream.

Paddling with a two person team can be fun – but it's quite a different vibe when you've been paddling in a strong group of five. Miriam and I were conscious of the new big volume feel of the river and a feeling of being entirely alone in the remote valley as we peeled out of the eddy and made the first move from right to left. We ran most of the big rapids on the forks run in the next hour – including a larger one in which I had a wee surf in the hole at the bottom. It wasn't all that long until we caught up with the last raft and stories from the larger team – one raft had flipped in the first rapid, and all guides were perfecting their backwards ferry glides as they negotiated rapids with rocks.

The forks team had also been astonishingly efficient. Most of boats were on the water by 10.30am. There was a helicopter photo shoot of the hundred strong crew with an absolutely enormous banner made by Forest and Bird and there were some amazing moving and still images taken, illustrating the passion and enthusiasm of the conservation and whitewater community for saving the river. The big rapid caused an understandable amount

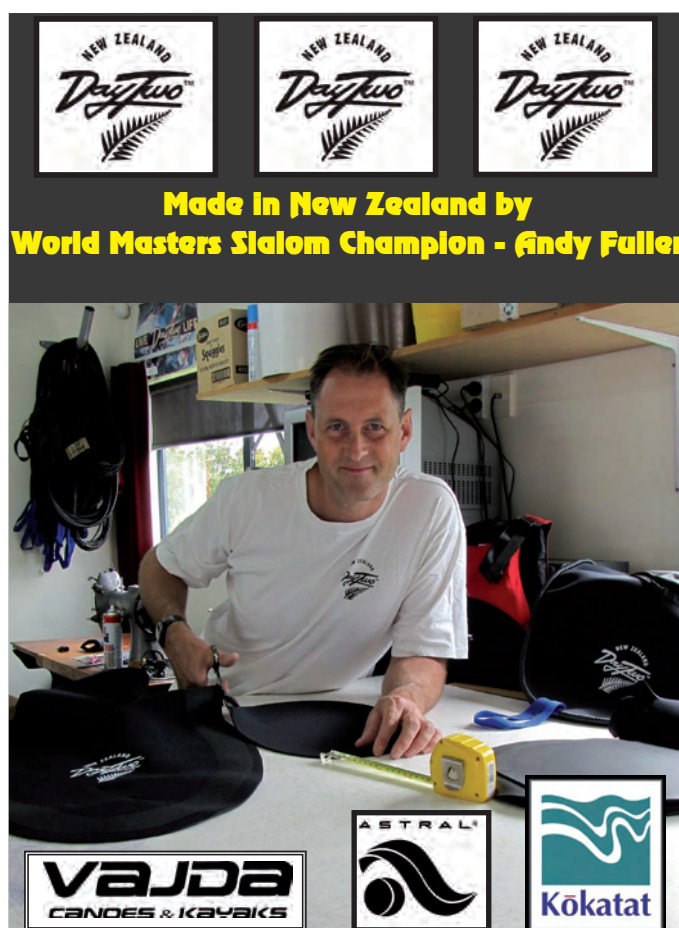
of faffing as everyone nervously eyed the length of the rapid and the size of the hydraulics. However, all the rafts made it down sunny side up.

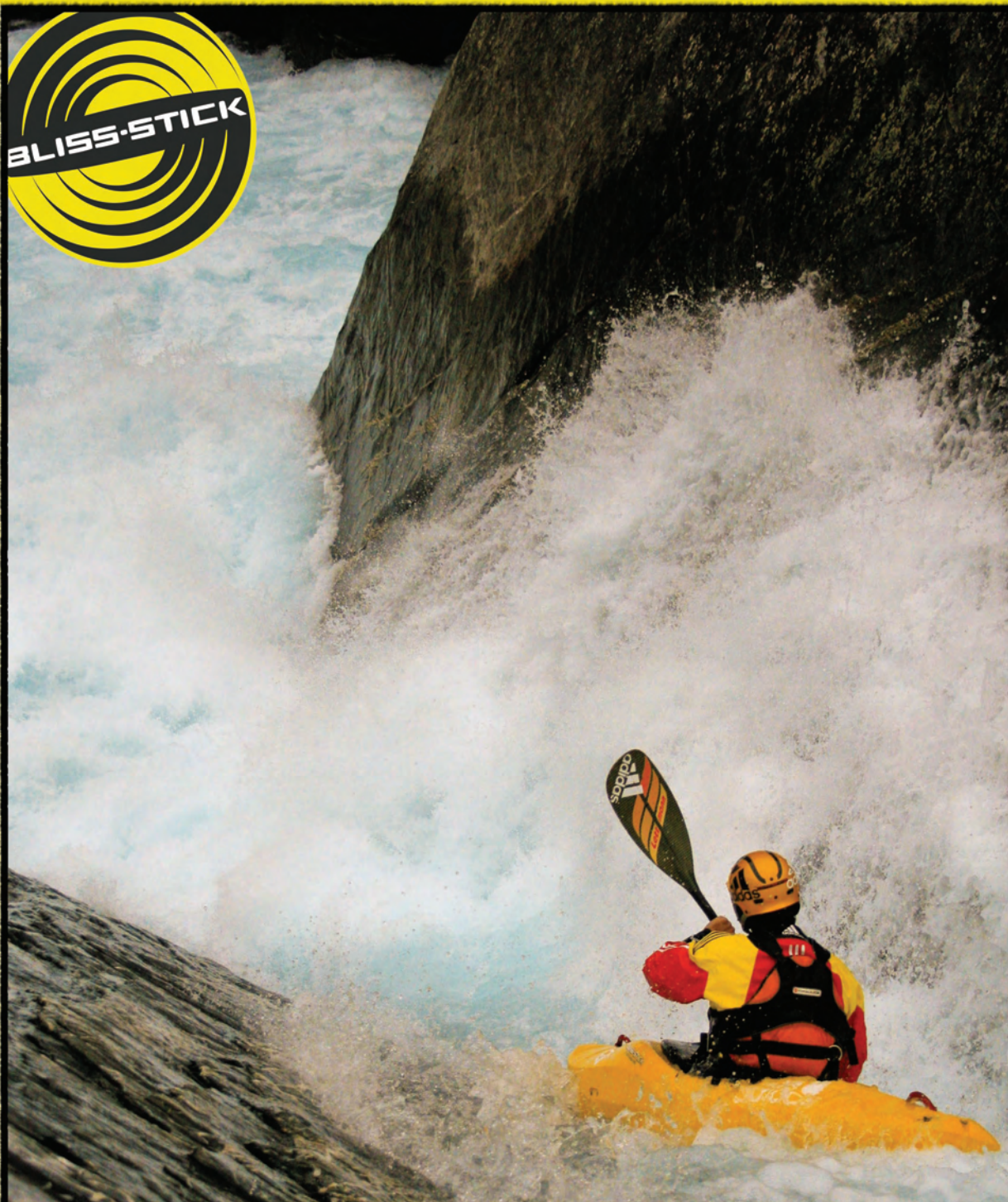
We cruised past more rafts floating through deep green pools and played with kayakers surfing waves and catching eddies. It wasn't long before Forest and Bird people on the river bank waved and told us the takeout was just around the corner.

Beer and a bite to eat at Drifters Café in Granity provided an excellent opportunity to and catch up on other stories on this extraordinary river trip – the whole circus appeared to have run like clockwork.

If you'd like to see more of the Mokihinui, Whitewater NZ have produced a DVD: *A Tale of Two Rivers* to help save it. The short film has been shown throughout New Zealand, appearing at the Wanaka Film Festival and various forums in Wellington. If you'd like to arrange a showing please contact conservation@rivers.org.nz or check <http://rivers.org.nz/a-tale-of-two-rivers> for more information.

Thank you to all those whose hard work made this trip possible. The Mokihinui is indeed an extraordinary river, and too precious to dam.





KIWI DOMINATION TOUR 2010

IN 2010 THE FASTEST EXTREME KAYAKERS IN THE WORLD HAVE BEEN FROM NEW ZEALAND FROM COLORADO TO ITALY, AND FINALLY IN AUSTRIA AT THE SICKLINE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

BLISS-STICK ARE PROUD TO SUPPORT SAM SUTTON, MIKE DAWSON, AND JOHANN ROOZENBURG AND ARE STOKED THAT THEY CHOOSE TO PADDLE THE MYSTIC WHEN THEY'RE DOMINATING.

WWW.BLISS-STICK.COM

SAM SUTTON ON THE KOKATAHI, IMAGE MIKE DAWSON

Lessons from Mangatepopo

By Mick Hopkinson

Some thoughts after reading the Coroner's Report on the Mangatepopo canyoning tragedy

On 15 April 2008 an OPC instructor led 10 Elim college students on a canyoning trip in the Mangatepopo Gorge. After heavy rain, six students and the teacher drowned while trying to get out of the flooded gorge. The instructor and four students survived. The coroner's report can be found at:

<http://www.opc.org.nz/uploads/content/Coroners%20Report.pdf>

When someone gets the phone call that their best friend/paddling partner/fellow paddler/colleague has drowned then the first question I ask is "HOW?" I need to know how to try and learn from it and to try and stop it happening again to avert the incalculable grief it causes.

How did Anthony Mulder, Floyd Fernandes, Natasha Bray, Portia McPhail, Tara Gregory, Tom Hsu, and Antony McClean drown on the Mangatepopo River on April 15th 2008? According to the Coroner: "Postmortem examinations conducted on the victims confirmed their deaths occurred by drowning."

They drowned by drowning?

HOW did seven people wearing wetsuits, helmets and "personal floatation devices" drown? What was the mechanism that caused them to drown?

Many questions do not appear to have been posed during the inquiry. A few of these are: What was the grade and temperature of the Mangatepopo at 17 cumecs?

What equipment (helmets, pfd's, wetsuits, boots etc) was used and in what state was it before and after the event?

Were injuries sustained that may have incapacitated the swimmers?

How were the paired swimmers actually attached and did this play a role in their drowning?

Was any analysis or testing done to determine how long a person wearing wetsuit, buoyancy aid, helmet, boots etc would be retained in the

'dam' at 17 cumecs?

Were the behaviours, body positions, and timing of Sarah Brooks' and Kish Proctor's descents of the weir in any way different from that of the rest of the party who died?

Did the wire rope on top of the dam that the surviving swimmers briefly held make the critical difference?

ANALYSIS

Of 15 deaths between 1987 and 2008 on similar New Zealand whitewater (see table below), none of the victims died in the process of merely swimming down rapids graded up to class 5. In 12 of the cases the mechanism was pinning or underwater entrapment. Rod Banks was the only one of these who was moving down the river after the event that caused him to leave his kayak, however he had lost his buoyancy aid at some point and most likely drowned after being pinned. Three cases can be attributed to hydraulics:

Name	River, Year, Mechanism
Simon Mclearie	Tongariro, 1987, Trapped in the hydraulic formed at the base of the Poutu intake structure.
Matt Link	Whakapapa, 1989, Pitchpole pin on reinforcing bar in the concrete bed of intake structure.
Teresa Emmanuelson	Taramakau, 1996, Pinned on a tree in a Dancer kayak.
Matt Daley	Kawarau, 1998, Flushed into an undercut in his kayak.
Robin Dodd	Hokitika, 1999, Pinned in Dagger redline underwater on class five rapid.
Guenther Schuppen	Nevis, 1999, Drawn into a sieve when the class 5 river was running at 40 cumecs.
Niamh Tompkins	Waikato, 1999, Swimming the boil line at Full James without a buoyancy aid.
Rod Banks	Hokitika, 1999, Probably pinned by his foot and hung downstream long enough for his buoyancy aid to wash off. The subsequent class four swim probably caused him to drown.
Tim Jamieson	Buller, 2002, Pinned on a log in a class three rapid and gradually slipped underwater as his strength failed.
Zephlyn Vhahovich	Kawarau, 2003, Trapped in a hydraulic jump formed by the weir between the Kawarau bridge pylons on class one water.
James Acton	Waikaia, 2003, Pinned in a Dagger CFS in a narrow channel on river right. The rescue efforts of his friends resulted in him being swept into the immediate downstream sieve where he drowned.
Eleanor Rutter	Crooked, 2004, Swam out of her kayak after a failed roll attempt and was pinned underwater in a narrow slot.
Dennis Squires	Waikaia, 2007, Trapped underwater by a tree and died of traumatic injuries (broken neck) sustained during the entrapment.
Kyle Stidham	Kaituna, 2007, Trapped underwater in his kayak when it became wedged between two trees.
Emma Louise Jordan	Kawarau 2008, Pinned underwater between two rocks.

Selected whitewater deaths in New Zealand

two were man-made structures (the weir between the two bridge pillars on the Kawerau bridge and the Poutu intake on the Tongariro River) and the remaining case was Niamh Tompkins who swam on the eddy line at Nga Awa Purua/ Full James without a buoyancy aid. In all 15 cases there was a mechanism that held the victim under water.

The Mangatepopo River below the weir has been "swum" in flood flows by OPC instructor, Quentin Mitchell, in 1981. Quentin tried to kayak this piece of water and ended up swimming the stretch. He lived. Swims on Class 4 and 5 whitewater are relatively common in New Zealand both in the recreational kayaking world and in the commercial rafting world. They rarely end in fatalities unless some other mechanism is present.

Of other tragedies on a similar scale (eg. canyoning incident at Saxtenbach in Switzerland) none bear detailed comparison with the Mangatepopo Gorge. In each case the cause was a flash flood, a rain event or a natural dam collapse upstream of the accident site which caused a sudden and devastating wall of water to funnel into the downstream gorge. We have to move into another sphere of activity to seek out a real precedent.

In July 1993, on the River Inn in Switzerland, a private raft

trip of 17 people missed the take out and mistakenly ran a weir/low head dam. One raft was a self bailer but the two older rafts were badly deformed by the hydraulic pressure of the weir. Nine people were drowned in the weir. They were wearing helmets, wetsuits and lifejackets. The causal sequence of this accident is entirely different but the mechanism of injury is identical to the Mangatepopo event. The mechanism of drowning was the hydraulic caused by the weir.

All kayakers should be aware of the dangers of man-made weirs. These structures provide a symmetry seldom present in nature that can produce a recirculating hydraulic with no flushing points. The sides are often vertical concrete, other debris can be trapped in the hydraulic and the buoyancy of anyone in the weir is decreased by the air bubbles produced by the recirculation. "In sum, these factors combined with the hydraulic current create a near perfect drowning machine."¹

¹ Excerpt from a tract by Kim A. Elverum and Tim Smalley, working for the Boat and Water Safety Section of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources:-

"In spring and during periods of heavy run-off, however, they (dams) become very dangerous. Torrents of water pouring over the dam create a churning backwash or current. This "hydraulic" as it is often called, is really a re-circulating current. The roiling current takes an object – including a person – to the bottom of the stream, releases it to the surface, sucks it back to the face of the dam and pushes it back to the bottom. This cycle can continue indefinitely."

Stockists of




Shred Ready







Paul Currant - Perth River, West Coast

CANOE & OUTDOOR WORLD

Unit 4, 7 Pilgrim Place
Christchurch
New Zealand
www.canoeworld.co.nz

Freephone: 0800 MOREFUN
(0800 667 338)
Ph 03 366 9305
Fax 03 366 9309

CONCLUSION

I strongly believe that the cause of the “deaths by drowning” in the OPC event was the Genesis Energy structure in the Mangatepopo Gorge. In light of the above analysis it can be concluded that the hydraulic at the base of the weir at 17 cumecs was re-circulating strongly enough to retain some of the victims until they drowned. The Coroner has hinted at this but only briefly: “While I am aware of the issue that the design of the dam itself may have contributed to the deaths of persons going over the dam, the dam and intake were designed for Genesis Energy purposes. If OPC intend to continue using the gorge and the dam as part of its operations, it should consider discussing with Genesis or whoever else is responsible for the dam whether it is appropriate for changes to be made to reduce the likelihood of fatalities.”

The Coroner’s recommendations are very thorough but essentially extremely site specific to OPC and its organisational structure. He does not properly address the issue

of the weir.

The real acid test is this: How many students would have died in the Mangatepopo River at 17 cumecs if the weir had not been there or if it had been built with natural exit/flushing points?

At least 10 people have died on structures in New Zealand Rivers and nine of these ten people have died on Genesis Energy structures.

If we accept that the weir was the cause of death then the Coroner’s recommendations might include the ELIMINATION, ISOLATION OR MINIMISATION of this cause, both in the Mangatepopo River and NATIONALLY. 80% of New Zealand’s rivers have hydro-electric schemes on them. The remaining 20% are the targets of future Hydro Electric schemes. If a tragedy of this nature does not result in a review of the design and construction of dams and weirs then what event will?

Conservation News

By Tony Ward-Holmes

Land and Water Forum

It may seem quite academic but the biggest news in the last few months is the release of the Land and Water Forum report. This is to be picked up by the Ministry for the Environment and turned into a suite of changes to the RMA and other legislation. First however there is one more round of public ‘engagement’ meetings, which has already happened in most of the North Island. The remaining engagement meetings are in 2011:

Wed 9 Feb	Christchurch—venue TBA
Thurs10 Feb	Timaru—venue TBA
Mon 4 Feb	Hokitika —venue TBA
Thurs17 Feb	Whangarei —venue TBA
Tues 22 Feb	Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Conference Room 30 The Octagon
Wed 23 Feb	Invercargill—venue TBA
Tues 1 March	Hastings—venue TBA
Wed 2 March	Gisborne District Council, Rose Room, 15 Fitzherbert Street,
Thurs 3 March	Blenheim—venue TBA

If you are in any of these areas please head along to the consultation sessions and represent

kayakers. We go places in rivers that nobody else can get to, and the flip side of that is that few others know, appreciate or value rivers in the same way. Important parts of the report for paddlers are that recreational amenity is always included in assessments, collaborative approaches are used to try and find win-wins, and for consultation to be early before millions have been committed to projects that may have been designed differently.

Hurunui River Moratorium

The Hurunui River situation was already complex. The Special Tribunal recommended a Water Conservation Order (WCO) but HWP (the Hurunui Water Project) and others appealed it. HWP has applied for consents to build a dam and Fish & Game and Whitewater NZ were opposing this. Ngai Tahu first supported the WCO then opposed it. Then the government pulled the rug out from under us by (under cover of the ECan act pushed through under urgency at Easter without admitting the details to parliament) by changing the tests for, and the protection provided by, a WCO. But now it has got even more complicated. Canterbury’s NRRP (Natural Resources Regional Plan) has just been released, all 6000 pages of it. Amongst other things it mandates no dam across the main

stem of the Hurunui, which is not much different from what the Special Tribunal recommended for the WCO. And ironically, the provisions in the ECan Act which prevent appeals to Environment Court also apply to the NRRP. So HWP have one last resort, appealing to High Court, however that is only allowed under points of law and it is very doubtful that they will get anywhere.

Mokihinui / Nevis / Mokau

A little like the battle for the Hurunui, paddlers are deep in paper-wars for all of these rivers. The Environment Court hearing for the Mokihinui is repeatedly delayed. Meridian has applied to Court for more time for more research. However there seems to be no focus on the land exchange that they also need and which could save millions of taxpayer dollars if it were resolved first. Whitewater NZ and allied organisations will keep the pressure on Meridian to start acting more responsibly, a great example of this is the Labour Weekend mass-descent which saw 120 people paddle and raft down the river and was covered

by TV3 News and major newspapers. A special tribunal recommended the Nevis be included in the Kawarau Water Conservation Order, but Pioneer Energy appealed to the Environment Court as they still plan to build a dam on it. On the Mokau, King Country Energy's application to build a dam was declined. They have also appealed to the Environment Court and applied for new consents for a revised design. There are a variety of mediation sessions or pre-hearing meetings happening relating to these rivers. Court hearings will likely start in late 2011.

Matiri

The Matiri Hydro scheme had consents granted to build a dam. However it also needs a concession from DOC. DOC has approved it in principle but has notified it for consultation. Submissions close on Jan 31. More information can be found on DOC's website under *Getting Involved*: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/consultations/current/notified-concession-applications/intention-to-grant-a-concession->

Releases and Events

Wairoa River Release from McLaren Falls	26 and 27 March 2011	09:00 - 15:00
Every Sunday	10:00 - 16:00	
Every second Sunday from March 2011		
Tongariro River Release (Access 10)	Piripaua River releases	
5 February 2011	12 December 2010	09:00 - 15:00
	15 and 16 January 2011	09:00 - 15:00
	27 February 2011	09:00 - 15:00
	26 and 27 March 2011	10:00 - 16:00
Tongariro River Release (Access 14 and 13)		
9 January 2011		
6 February 2011		
Whakamarino River Release	Refer to our website (rivers.org.nz/events/) for the latest release schedules, including flow information.	

river, boof, waterfall, sieve, huck, drop, paddle, rock, loop, cartwheel, air, nature, 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, pourover, stroke, slice, pfd, donkey flip, helmet, race, wave, expedition, friends, lines, camping, throw-bag, movies, trips, adventures, knife, ecology, fitness, life, lateral, gate, undercut, lifejacket, carry, challenge, pour-over, competition, breath, crank, shuttle, mission, sunshine, passion, road-trip, events, prizes, tips, techniques, pin-drop, seal launch,



AVAILABLE AT KAYAK & BOOKSTORES ALL OVER NEW ZEALAND, OR VISIT WWW.CUMECMAGAZINE.COM TO SUBSCRIBE

Highlights...

By Toni George.

For most of my last summer in NZ, I was banned from kayaking and everything else resembling fun due to a silly mountain biking accident. There were a few upsides to breaking my neck though. I had an operation similar to that of Wolverine on X-MEN Origins, I passed all my final exams, and I saved enough money for plane ticket to California.

My plan for the 3 months I was allowed in the States was as specific as 'paddle some new rivers'. It's easy to reach goals if you keep them simple. Days passed, rivers were paddled and epics were had. Some of the more memorable highlights were driving through rain, hail and snow to paddle the Upper Middle Cosumnes River with a solid crew. Five swims from people I had never seen swim before, one broken paddle and a temporarily lost paddle ensured that we barely made it off the river before dark. Another memorable experience was when Terry, the not so trusty 1985 Toyota Tercel, managed to crawl 2120 miles across three states to make it to the Teva Mountain Games where the kiwi team dominated both the extreme kayak races and the party scene.

On returning to California I hooked up with the Okawa Bay crew for more good times. With 8 kiwis, one American and a Border Collie puppy all crammed into the van we called 'Mum' we paddled more awesome rivers, chased Californian black bears in Sequoia National Park, climbed mountains at sunset, had run ins with rattlesnakes and set a bad example for small children in Yosemite National Park. To be fair, the sign on the bridge said 'no jumping' not 'no backflips or gainers' but its probably better not to draw attention to yourself when the car you're driving is parked on yellow lines and the registration has just run out. As the season went on the highlights list grew fast: The East Meets West drop on the South Yuba, firing up South Silver when everyone except Josh said it was too high and Brad and Jamie hauling me out of a rather retentive hole on the East Kaweah. The list goes on.



The team on Moro Rock

Of all the rivers we paddled throughout the season the multiday runs stood out the most. It all began with 'Royal Gorge' on the American. We hid in the back of 'Mum' all fully geared up on the way to the put in, ready to jump out and run across the 5 metres of private land separating the public road from the river without being shot at by redneck land owners or chased by their dogs. After a successful put in, we paddled down, camping out at Rattlesnake campground, right next to a 50ft waterfall. The 3 days on Royal Gorge were filled with big waterfalls and classic whitewater. Dinky Creek followed; sliding down rapids on our bums and playing in river pot holes carved out in the rapids by thousands of years of snow run off in between two days of wicked slides and sick boofs. We had awesome high water slides on the last day of West Cherry before the confluence of the famous Upper Cherry run. We camped out at Flintstone Camp, tried to chow down the ridiculous amount of food we'd carried in and spent a whole day doing laps on the 'Jedi Training' slides and 'Tea Cup' waterfalls. All moments that make the highlight list for sure. Before I knew it nearly three months had sped by and my temporary visa waiver was running out. Around the same time Josh had been researching rivers for a trip he had planned to Thailand and suggested I join him, Lou and Tyler on the trip. After seeing a few photos of rivers falling through jungle and a quick check on the bank balance the deal was done. Next destination: Bangkok, Thailand.

After arriving in Thailand with almost all of our bags our first mission was to find some green curry and eat it. Yum! Over the next couple of days we ate more delicious Thai food, received the remaining bags from the airport, hired a car, and bartered some wood off a couple of construction workers to engineer some make-shift roof racks. We also practiced speaking elementary Thai. 'Nam tok te nae?' - where is the waterfall?, and 'kor kau pat mu ka' - I'd like pork fried rice please.

The good thing about looking for rivers in Thailand is that Thai people love waterfalls and



Jamie Garrod, Nicki Kelly Slide, Photo Jared Mitchell



Tyler Fox on the Mae Sa, Photo: Toni George

there are hundreds of websites replete with photos and locations. Many rivers in Thailand run through one or more national parks. Unfortunately for us national parks are heavily patrolled by park rangers who have mixed reactions to kayakers showing up with brightly coloured boats. On our first encounter with park rangers we arrived at a beautiful 60ft waterfall at perfect flow and excitedly unloaded our kayaks only to be told by the park rangers that we weren't allowed to paddle it. At the next waterfall we came to we tried to be a bit more subtle. It's hard to be subtle when you're boofing off a 20ft drop right next to park headquarters. We thought we'd drifted past unnoticed until we walked back up to the car and passed old Thai ladies clapping and cheering while the park rangers took photos and smiled. Throughout the rest of the trip we were met with some refusal and some concern but mostly with enthusiasm and amusement. Thai people generally seem friendly to tourists and eager to help. A big thanks to each and every Thai person we questioned on the road or on a track and received a smile, a nod, and a gesture in the right direction. We experienced lots of fun drops and cool rivers and loads of amazing, freshly cooked, cheap food.

The coolest river we paddled in Thailand would have to be the Mae Sa. After a night of heavy rain in Chiang Mai and an 'American breakfast' – Coffee, orange juice, toast, bacon and eggs, all for roughly \$4NZD - we headed out to the Mae Sa. We arrived to find it at optimal flow and as the section we were paddling didn't run through a national park we had no access issues. As the river narrowed and the gradient started to pick up we were greeted by guys on the side of the river saying 'nam tok, nam tok' and point-

ing downstream. Always a good sign. Josh braved the language barrier with a Thai version of 'It's all good bro,' and they followed us to the first drop to watch us paddle it. More great drops and slides followed as we paddled through lush jungle and past riverside bamboo huts. As we neared the take out we paddled through an elephant park and got to see elephants hanging out beside the river. It was getting late and we didn't know what was in the next section so we went home for some Pad Thai and a little Google Earth probing of the section below. Having discerned from our research that there was probably some gradient in the section we were to be paddling, we pushed off from the bank the next day eager to explore the new section. We found some good stuff mixed with a few portages before reaching the lower section. The lower section has 10 drops, most of them good to go. We fired up some slides for the entertainment of locals who were swimming in the river until we got to waterfall 7. The park ranger on duty wasn't happy with us using the river for something other than swimming. He escorted us from the park. This put an end to our paddling so we headed back to Chiang Mai for a red curry and a visit to the legendary night markets to end the day. Not a bad consolation prize.

So, looking back at four months on the road I can happily say I reached all of my goals. Or the one goal for that matter. I paddled lots of new rivers, some of which were first descents which was an extra bonus. Along the way my highlight list grew and grew and I can tell you it's impossible to write about them all because I would be here forever. If you would like to read more about my experiences while overseas this year and in the future check out www.toni-george.blogspot.com. Thanks, Toni

rasdex

- ❖ Buoyancy vests
- ❖ Paddle jackets
- ❖ Paddle pants
- ❖ Rhino decks
- ❖ Spraydecks

info@rasdex.co.nz

Whitewater NZ

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

PO Box 284 Wellington • Ph +64 21 027 58661 • whitewaternz@rivers.org.nz • www.rivers.org.nz

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

Individual Membership Form

Whitewater New Zealand

PO Box 284 Wellington

E-mail: nzrca@rivers.org.nz

Website: www.rivers.org.nz/membership

Individual Membership

\$ 30.00

Please note that Club and Associate members pay different fees. See our website: www.rivers.org.nz/membership for details of other membership classes.

Donation

\$.00

Additional support for our work in Conservation, Access, Safety and Education is gratefully appreciated.

Total \$.00

Tick to receive a receipt

☐

Make cheques out to "Whitewater NZ" and send to
PO Box 284 Wellington. **Welcome!**

Personal Details

Name

Ph (day)

Ph (a/h)

Address

E-mail

Fax

Occupation

Club

Your membership details are managed by Whitewater NZ in accordance with the Incorporated Societies Act (1908) and the Privacy Act (1993).

For Whitewater NZ Use Only

Membership ID

--	--	--	--	--

Response Date

--	--	--	--	--	--

Receipt #

--	--	--	--	--

Deposited

--	--	--	--	--	--