

**IN THE MATTER** of the Resource Management Act 1991

**AND**

**IN THE MATTER** of an application pursuant to Section 201 for a Water Conservation Order on the Hurunui River.

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**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF CLIVE STEWART CHAPMAN  
ON BEHALF OF  
NORTH CANTERBURY FISH AND GAME COUNCIL**

**Dated 6 March 2009**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

**Qualifications and Experience**

2. My name is Clive Stewart Chapman but I am commonly know as "Chappie" Chapman
3. I have lived in Christchurch for the past 25 years. I have been fly-fishing since I was 13 years old. I have been trout fishing guiding on a part time basis in excess of 20 years and on a full time basis for the last 14 years. Guiding along with running fly-casting schools is my sole income. Although my guiding business is based in Christchurch, I frequent all of the North and South Canterbury areas, West Coast, Central South Island, and some rivers in North Otago.
4. As a guide I average 100 days fishing a season. In addition I also spend approximately between 50-75 furthers days fishing for my own personal interest.

5. I have written a book called "Dancing Rivers", written numerous magazine articles and I am currently writing a second book. Before I was a guide I was involved in the fishing tackle industry as a company rep, this involved designing fishing tackle and marketing.
6. In the 1970s I was lucky enough to go fishing and only fishing for a period of 3.5 years. During these years I was averaging 210 fishing days. When you consider those figures it could easily be argued that that short period of time is equivalent to about 30 years of fishing. This experience has given me a great knowledge base for my job. I would have between 275 and 300 rivers in the South Island that I feel completely comfortable with in regard to guiding and a further 100-150 that I could get away with.
7. I know the Upper reaches of the Hurunui extremely well. I regard the South Branch, North Branch above the Lake and the mainstem as quite different fisheries. Therefore I have described them separately in my evidence.
- 7.1 I confirm that I have read and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses. This evidence is within my area of expertise, except where I state that I am relying on facts or information provided by another person. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions that I express.

### **Scope of Evidence**

8. My evidence will address:
  - Main stem below Lake Sumner
  - South Branch
  - North Branch
  - Lower Hurunui
  - Degradation of other rivers
  - Flows
  - Range of opportunity
  - Conclusion

## **Mainstem below Lake Sumner**

9. The mainstem of the Hurunui below Lake Sumner is a very important fishery, in terms of its accessibility from a recreational point of view and a guiding point of view. It is also very popular for other uses such as camping, canoeing and hunting. I would say that that piece of water is the most used piece of water in North Canterbury, possibly even the whole of Canterbury. If you go to this reach of the river during weekends you would find that it would be very busy.
10. In regards to fishing I have got diaries that go back to January 2000 for this reach of the river. It seems from these records that the average fish per day with clients is around 3.5. Fish here weight wise seem to be around about the national average of 4.5lbs.
11. It is a very productive stretch of river for numbers of fish, as proved by Fish and Game drift dive surveys. It is a very productive reach for fish production as proven by the size of the fish we catch there.
12. There are also runs of searun trout both early and late in the fishing season.
13. I have also observed what I believe to be searun fish in this river after a freshes have come through. I can tell these fish are searun due to their paler colour and their extremely good condition. The scales of the searun fish also fall off very easily in your hand, even if handled very carefully.
14. The resident fish in comparison are darker, usually have green backs, and they often have orange spots. It is my suspicion that over time some of the searun fish become resident fish and inherit those characteristics.
15. I first fished the Mainstem in 1974. Back then it was very rare to see another angler. The fishing is still excellent now despite the mounting pressure of anglers since that time. The fishing is certainly different

to what it was in the 70s. It is my opinion that the fish were probably bigger back then. I think there is more smaller fish now which is indicative of angling pressure.

16. Despite this it appears to be a very resilient fishery and I regard the Upper Hurunui with the combination of the mainstem, the South Branch and the North to be a world class fishery.
17. In drawing comparisons of the mainstem with other rivers. One river which comes to mind is the Clarence. This is also lake fed and is easily accessible by vehicle. It is a popular river for fishing, sightseeing and also rafting and canoeing in the middle reaches.
18. The fish cycle is more variable in the Clarence with some years producing large amounts of small fish and other years producing exactly the opposite, with small amounts of large fish. I think this is a factor of the varying flows of the Clarence. Like most of our rivers the Clarence can be quite unstable as Lake Tennyson is probably not big enough to regulate the flows like Lake Sumner does to the Hurunui.
19. Another river which holds similar numbers of fish to the Hurunui is the Tekapo River. I personally do not have a lot of time for the Tekapo due to the amount of fishing pressure it receives. I have encountered problems on this River with the etiquette of other anglers when I have been guiding clients. In the industry we like to use the word "gazumped", which is when another angler cuts in front of you.
20. I do not have the same issues on the Hurunui to the same extent. If I go to fish the Hurunui in the weekend, when a lot of other anglers are present, I go to a section of the main stem accessed by going through Lakes Station. There is less chance of getting "gazumped" here. Despite the fact that there is usually activity right at the lake outlet and there is a public walking track on the true left of the river.
21. I have found that although Lakes Station does charge they generally do not refuse access. I find that my clients will just marvel at the scenery at this reach of the river. I think that the Upper reaches of

the Hurunui are just as stunning scenically as rivers such as the Upper Ahuriri, or the Clarence and is more outstanding than rivers such as the Tekapo.

### **South Branch**

22. The South Branch is something special. To me it is a magical place with stunning scenery, whether you are in the gorge, on the more open flats, or in the upper valley by Lake Mason.
23. The South Branch is an area that I have been fishing for 25 years. I discovered it shortly after I arrived in Christchurch. I regard it as the best “wilderness” fishing in North Canterbury, possibly even the whole of Canterbury.
24. The access is a little difficult but by no means impossible. A fee is paid to Lake Taylor Station or Esk Head Station. I use Lake Taylor Station as a camping base and also take clients to stay at the hut at Lake Mason.
25. My clients become enchanted from the wilderness aspects of these trips to the South Branch. On top of these scenic qualities, the fishing is also special.
26. There are more big fish per kilometre than any other river in North Canterbury with the possible exception of the Upper Waiau. It looks as if the access to the Upper Waiau may now be restricted.
27. I can not praise the fishery resource of the South Branch too much. I fish through the gorge on day trips. On some occasions I have stayed at Esk Head Station and have fished the North Esk. I regularly fish the braids above the gorge accessed from Lake Taylor Station.

28. I use the South Branch for helicopter day trips from Christchurch. In fact if a client wants a helicopter day trip, the South Branch is always my first choice. It is an affordable helicopter option for my clients.
29. The South Branch is also my first choice for clients who have limited time such as one day but still want to experience world class backcountry fishing.
30. According to my catch rates which I have kept since 2000, the South Branch has an average weight of fish which is 6.17lbs. I consider this outstanding as it is about 1.5lbs bigger than the national average of 4.5lbs.
31. The South Branch compares very favourably with other rivers that I fish throughout New Zealand. It rates very high aesthetically to fish in such scenic surroundings. There is also the very real prospect of catching a trophy fish with every visit to the river.
32. Trophy trout to a New Zealander is considered to be anything above the weight of 10lbs. However to clients visiting from North America, United Kingdom or Europe a trophy trout is considered to be 5 or 6lbs. They can regularly exceed meet their requirements for what they regard as a trophy fish in the South Branch and often exceed it. Fish in the 7 or 8lb range are a common occurrence.
33. I once had one of those magic days on the South Branch which guides never forget as we saw in excess of 40 fish for the day which is unbelievable. I had two very skilled clients who managed to land 20 fish. The best fish of the day was around 9 1/2lbs. To catch 20 Brown Trout in a South Island stream is amazing. I consider this to be world class fishing.
34. I think that to maintain this sort of fishery there has to be good recruitment of fish from elsewhere in the catchment, but I also think that the South Branch with less fish numbers provides has more food available to the trout compared to the mainstem which has higher numbers of fish competing for food. I do not think it is a bad thing that

the there are smaller fish in the mainstem because of this, as the sheer numbers of fish provide good opportunities for anglers.

35. I consider that the South Branch has similar runs of sea run fish to what I have described above for the mainstem. I have also been surprised at the number of salmon I have seen in the South Branch from the end of February onwards. I have observed these salmon right through the river as far up as the reaches above Lake Mason. It is obviously an important spawning river for salmon.
36. Everywhere in the South Branch holds trout. The gorge, the braids, pocket water, I have seen fish right up to where the river disappears under the ground but have never ventured further.
37. Approximately 94% of my clients are from overseas. Although the feedback from my clients is very positive towards their overall experience in New Zealand I make a special effort to point out the qualities of the South Branch of which they are always appreciative. Even when the river is very hard to fish under trying conditions I always get remarks from my clients about how the South Branch is a special place.
38. I can't think of any time where I have had user conflict. I have never been "gazumped" on the South Branch. There could be dozens of anglers along different reaches of the South Branch and all would have a good days fishing without conflict.
39. I have also fished Lake Mason regularly. There were bigger fish in this lake when I fished it twenty years ago. I have caught fish up to 9lbs in this lake in the past but would now only expect fish up to 5lb. However I still regard this lake as a very good fishery.
40. The small lake provides excellent fly-fishing as it is shallower allowing greater opportunity for fishing to available fish. All the edges of this lake can be fished from the shore. There are good numbers of 2-3lb trout and the dry fly-fishing at times can be extraordinary.

41. It would be a travesty if this outstanding fishery was lost. I think some sort of dam structure would decimate the South Branch fishery. I have never seen or heard of a reliable fish passage that actually works for large structures or dams. A good example is the lakes in the Waitaki catchment containing salmon ladders which have turned out to be an absolute disaster.
42. To put some sort of reservoir in the South Branch would severely alter the fishery. There maybe some short term trends of large fish present. However, this would then level off and the fishery would be a shadow of its former self. Obviously a structure of some kind would cease the passage of searunners for recruitment and the salmon that I described earlier.

### **North Branch**

43. I do not fish this area as much as the South Branch but I am still very familiar with its qualities. My diaries for the North Branch go back to March 2000.
44. From these records it appears that the average weight of fish was 5.9lbs. Only fractionally smaller than those of the South Branch. Like the South Branch it is considered to be a trophy fishery.
45. The North Branch is a very popular area. I am cautious with my trips there as it is a long drive in only to find other anglers already there. It does sustain a reasonable amount of angling pressure and I think that the fish are more challenging to catch as a result.
46. Having said that I have had some very successful days on the North Branch including one day earlier this year, when the weather was less than ideal with rain present and the barometric pressure being low. Despite this fish were still feeding from the surface as they would on a hot fine summer's day, quite extraordinary. We only fished 3 or 4 pools above the swing bridge and found fish everywhere.

47. Despite these good days I am less likely to take clients into the North Branch in case of conflict with other anglers. There is no point in fishing second hand water when it comes to brown trout fishing.
48. I find the scenic qualities of the North Branch to be outstanding. Quite different from the scenic qualities of the South Branch or the mainstem. The North Branch above Lake Sumner is the epitome of what a backcountry river should be in this country with its gin clear water, the grassy river flats, and the towering bush clad hills on both sides. It is exactly the sort of river you see gracing magazine covers or fishing brochures. It is worth visiting just for the scenic drive alone.

### **Lower Reaches**

49. I usually fish the lower reaches in the late season when lower flows are more common and there is a new run of fish coming from the sea. I regard the Lower Hurunui an excellent fishery in its own right. I would spend between 15-18% of guiding and personal time on the lower reaches.
50. The lower reaches of the Hurunui are quite different from other Canterbury rivers as it is not so braided and goes through another gorge below SH7.

### **Degradation of other rivers**

51. In 1974 I fished the Selwyn and the Hororata for the first time. I absolutely marvelled at the quality of the fishing in these two rivers. Especially when it was so close to down town Christchurch.
52. The rivers back then were clear and clean containing massive amounts of insects and aquatic life. I am told that back then 80% of the angling effort from North Canterbury anglers was spent on the Selwyn River. The quality of the fishing was so superb you could see why anglers did not bother to go further a field.

53. I cannot believe that it is the same river today. A couple of years ago I walked 3 different reaches of the Hororata in September when good flows can be expected. The first two reaches, I found not enough water to sustain fish life. The third had life in the stream in the form of a herd of cattle.
54. The abstraction of water and the subsequent damage to underground aquifers has totally destroyed these rivers. This is in the name of so called "progress". The people vouching for this progress obviously do not have a real appreciation for the environment or recreational values for others that use these rivers.
55. From a fishing guides point of view we are having a lot of things conspiring against us. The effects of an increase in dairying have resulted in lower flows of our lowland streams and poorer water quality. I have seen this degradation in South Canterbury streams which I believe are heading in the same direction as the Selwyn and Hororata Rivers.
56. On top of this other rivers are now being closed to access in the Canterbury High Country. All these factors have resulted in less available water to fish.
57. The resulting loss of these rivers means anglers have been displaced. The Hurunui is an obvious substitute for these rivers.
58. Rivers closer to Christchurch such as the Waimakariri and its tributaries do hold trout. The Waimakariri is of course a very important salmon fishery but the mainstem of the river is not that great for trout fishing. This is not surprising as the river is very unstable. Trout stocks are also more limited in the headwaters. These waters offer the occasional big fish. The aesthetics values of fishing rivers such as the Waimakariri is not very high until you venture right into the very headwaters of the catchment. The Hurunui however as a special charm of its own no matter what reach of river you fishing.

## **Flows**

59. Anything under 40 cumecs and the Hurunui River becomes fishable. In my opinion the river becomes unfishable above 60 cumecs. This does not mean that anglers want the river constantly below 40 cumecs. It is very important that the river maintains its natural high flows and freshes. These freshes are important for the health of the river and can also act as a trigger for fish to migrate upstream from the sea and lower reaches. A controlled flow in the Upper Hurunui would decrease the value of fly-fishing and the lack of flushing flows would have an effect on the fishery itself. The didymo would flourish under such conditions.
60. My preference for fishing the mainstem below Lake Sumner is for the flow at Mandamus to be under 25 cumecs. When I fish the reach of river just above the Mandamus confluence the flow needs to be below 15 cumecs to be able to negotiate the river. Any higher than this the access gets very difficult. I also regularly fish the gorge on the lower reaches between SH7 and SH1 which also requires a flow of less than 15 cumecs to make the river accessible.
61. As you can see a variety of flows is need to provide opportunity for angling in may different reaches. The best possibly flow regime for the Upper Hurunui is one of natural sate.

## **Range of opportunity**

62. The Hurunui is a diverse river throughout its many different reaches, offering a range of fishing opportunities. One of the great things about this river is that the mainstem below Lake Sumner is often reliable when all other rivers are a write off due to high or dirty flows. One can still go there and fish the edges and still catch fish. There is generally always opportunity to fish somewhere in the Hurunui catchment.

63. In times of North West weather patterns when most rivers are blown out from high flows, the mainstem below the lake is the first choice for fishing. The only other river I can think of is the upper Clarence below the outlet of Lake Tennyson. However as explained earlier the Clarence does not have the fish stocks or the quality of water that the Hurunui offers.
64. There is also the option of fishing lakes during these weather patterns. However I find that my clients want to fish backcountry rivers rather than lakes.

### **Conclusion**

65. The Hurunui has high recreational value and is the recreational playground for Christchurch. Not just in fishing but also camping, boating, picnicking, general sightseeing and relaxing. It is probably the most visited area for the diverse range of recreation opportunities that are practiced out of anywhere in North Canterbury.
66. It is obvious that this river is extremely important to anglers. This has been demonstrated by the high number of angler days for the Hurunui identified through the National Angler Surveys. If something was to compromise the fishery of the Hurunui, where would all those anglers go? As I have explained earlier the alternatives are getting less and less, especially for water that remains fishable after North West rain. It is my opinion that some anglers might even give up the sport if the Hurunui fishery became no more.
67. If someone was to ask why the Hurunui is so important to me I would summarise the following points:

- The sense of isolation and solitude
- The relative ease of access
- The very real possibility of a trophy fish with every visit
- The Hurunui offers the ability to get into a wilderness area very easily
- The general ambience of the place and the sheer quality of the fishing

68. I cannot stress how important the Hurunui River is to me and other anglers alike. We can't lose it for the sake of short term gain. To lose the Hurunui fishery as we know it for the benefit of a smaller number of people would be a travesty

69. A Water Conservation Order would ensure that these extraordinary values that I have described are protected for those anglers that hold the Hurunui in such high regard.

**Chappie Chapman**

**March 2009**

Appendices

One – Records from fishing diaries

Two - Photos

## Appendix One – Catch records for the Hurunui River

DATE	HURUNUI NTH BRANCH BELOW LAKE SUMNER	WEIGHT IN POUNDS	LENGTH IN INCHES	SEX
2000/JAN 5TH	BROWN	3.4	22	M
JAN 5TH	BROWN	2.5	19	F
JAN 5TH	BROWN	5	24	F
Jan-22	BROWN	3	20	M
Jan-22	BROWN	1.5	14	F
Jan-22	BROWN	1.5	15	M
Jan-22	BROWN	5	26	F
SEPT 16/2000	BROWN	3.5	23	M
SEPT 16/2000	BROWN	4.5	25	M
OCT 26/2001	BROWN	3.5	24	M
OCT 26/2001	BROWN	2	17	F
OCT 26/2001	BROWN	2	18	M
NOV/8/2001	BROWN	4.5	25	F
NOV/8/2001	BROWN	4	24	F
NOV/8/2001	BROWN	2.5	20	M
NOV/8/2001	BROWN	2	17	M
NOV/8/2001	BROWN	3.5	23	F
DEC/12/2001	BROWN	2	17	F
DEC/12/2001	BROWN	3.5	22	F
DEC/12/2001	BROWN	4	24	M
DEC/12/2001	BROWN	1.5	13	M
JAN 15 2002	BROWN	6	26	F
JAN 15 2002	BROWN	4.5	25	F
JAN 15 2002	BROWN	5	26	F
OCT/23/20003	BROWN	4.5	26	M
OCT/23/20003	BROWN	3	21	M
OCT/23/20003	BROWN	2.5	19	F
DEC/6/2003	BROWN	4.5	26	F
DEC/6/2003	BROWN	3	22	M
DEC/6/2003	BROWN	1.5	14	F
DEC/6/2003	BROWN	2.5	18	M
JAN/29/2004	BROWN	3.5	24	F
JAN/29/2004	BROWN	5	27	M
JAN/29/2004	BROWN	4	25	M
JAN/29/2004	BROWN	2.5	22	F
FEB/24/2004	BROWN	4	25	F
FEB/24/2004	BROWN	3	24	M
FEB/24/2004	BROWN	2.5	20	M
MARCH/5/2004	BROWN	4	25	F
SEPT/20/2005	BROWN	3.5	25	M
SEPT/20/2005	BROWN	4	26	M
OCT/19/2005	BROWN	4.5	27	M
OCT/19/2005	BROWN	4	26	F
OCT/19/2005	BROWN	6	27	M
OCT/19/2005	BROWN	2.5	19	F
OCT/19/2005	BROWN	2	17	F
OCT/19/2005	BROWN	2	18	M

NOV/25/2005	BROWN	4	25	F
NOV/25/2005	BROWN	4.5	25	F
NOV/25/2005	BROWN	2.5	20	M
NOV/25/2005	BROWN	7	28	M
NOV/25/2005	BROWN	1.5	15	M
NOV/25/2005	BROWN	5	27	M
DEC/12/2005	BROWN	1.5	15	F
DEC/12/2005	BROWN	4	25	M
JAN/16/2006	BROWN	4.5	27	F
JAN/16/2006	BROWN	2.5	19	F
JAN/16/2006	BROWN	5	27	M
JAN/16/2006	BROWN	4	25	F
JAN/16/2006	BROWN	4	25	F
MARCH/18/2006	BROWN	3.5	25	F
MARCH/18/2006	BROWN	6	26	M
MARCH/18/2006	BROWN	4.5	27	M
MARCH/18/2006	BROWN	3	25	F
JAN/22/2007	BROWN	4.5	26	M
JAN/22/2007	BROWN	4	25	M
JAN/22/2007	BROWN	2.5	20	F
JAN/22/2007	BROWN	3	24	M
	Number	66		
	Average	3.5208955		
	Median	3.5		

**NORTH BRANCH - ABOVE LAKE SUMNER**

JAN/16/2000	BROWN	4.5	26	F
JAN/16/2000	BROWN	5.5	27	M
JAN/16/2000	BROWN	6	27	F
NOV/9/2001	BROWN	5	25	F
NOV/9/2001	BROWN	5.5	26	M
JAN/28/2002	BROWN	7	28	F
DEC/10/2002	BROWN	5.5	26	F
DEC/10/2002	BROWN	4	23	M
DEC/10/2002	BROWN	6	26	F
DEC/5/2003	BROWN	5	24	M
DEC/5/2003	BROWN	5	25	F
DEC/5/2003	BROWN	6.5	27	M
FEB/5/2004	BROWN	5.5	25	F
FEB/5/2004	BROWN	3.5	23	M
DEC/13/2005	BROWN	6	27	M
FEB/22/2006	BROWN	5.5	25	M
FEB/22/2006	BROWN	6.5	27	F
DEC/16/2006	BROWN	4.5	26	F
DEC/16/2006	BROWN	5.5	25	F

**SOUTH BRANCH HURUNUI**

JAN/6/2000	BROWN	8	29	M
JAN/6/2000	BROWN	6.5	28	F
JAN/6/2000	BROWN	6	27	F
NOV/18/2001	BROWN	5.5	26	F
NOV/18/2001	BROWN	6.5	28	M
NOV/18/2001	BROWN	7	28	F

NOV/18/2001	BROWN	5	25	M
NOV/18/2001	BROWN	3.5	22	M
NOV/18/2001	BROWN	5	25	M
NOV/18/2001	BROWN	11	31	M
FEB/15/2002	BROWN	5.5	27	F
FEB/15/2002	BROWN	6.5	27	F
FEB/15/2002	BROWN	11	31	M
MARCH/2/2002	BROWN	4.5	23	M
MARCH/2/2002	BROWN	6.5	28	F
MARCH/3/2002	BROWN	5.5	26	M
MARCH/3/2002	BROWN	6	25	F
NOV/4/2002	BROWN	5.5	27	F
NOV/4/2002	BROWN	5	26	M
NOV/4/2002	BROWN	8	28	F
JAN/10/2003	BROWN	6.5	28	F
JAN/10/2003	BROWN	6	27	M
NOV/23/2004	BROWN	4	23	M
NOV/23/2004	BROWN	5	23	F
NOV/23/2004	BROWN	5.5	26	F
NOV/23/2004	BROWN	7	28	M
DEC/06/04	BROWN	6	26	M
DEC/06/04	BROWN	6	27	F
DEC/06/04	BROWN	6.5	27	F
FEB/21/2005	BROWN	6	26	F
FEB/21/2005	BROWN	7.5	28	F
NOV/10/2005	BROWN	5.5	26	M
NOV/10/2005	BROWN	6.5	27	F
NOV/10/2005	BROWN	4	22	F
NOV/10/2005	BROWN	4.5	23	M
NOV/15/2006	BROWN	6	26	M
NOV/15/2006	BROWN	6.5	26	M
NOV/15/2006	BROWN	9	30	F
FEB/22/2007	BROWN	6	26	F
FEB/22/2007	BROWN	5.5	25	F
FEB/22/2007	BROWN	7.5	28	F
FEB/22/2007	BROWN	6.5	27	F

SAME FISH AS NOV  
18/2001

Appendix Two – Photos



