

**BEFORE THE SPECIAL TRIBUNAL ACTING UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY ON BEHALF OF
THE MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

Under the Resource Management Act 1991

In the matter of an application for a Water Conservation Order pursuant to s201 of
the Act

By **THE NEW ZEALAND & NORTH CANTERBURY FISH & GAME COUNCILS
AND THE NEW ZEALAND RECREATIONAL CANOE ASSOCIATION**

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF DOUGLAS BRUCE NORRIE ON BEHALF OF THE
HURUNUI WATER PROJECT**
23 MARCH 2009

1. My full name is Douglas Bruce Norrie. I have lived in the Amuri district for over 70 years and farming has been my career for 50 years. Now our three families also have that responsibility thanks to the sensible use of that precious water resource.
2. I was on the Amuri Plain's Irrigation Committee for 29 years of which I spent 9 years as Chairmen. It was during my time as Chairmen that the company was purchased from the Government. I have also spent 9 years on the Lake Sumner Forest Park Advisory Committee, several years on local body committees, 25 years with the Amuri Lions Club and have been Chairman and Secretary of the Amuri Rod and Gun Club as well as the president of the Amberley Gun Club for 3 years.
3. I have held a fishing and game bird shooting licence continually for 55 years and have travelled into the Hurunui conservation area over 100 times during my lifetime. I have also fished in many other rivers throughout North Canterbury over my lifetime and I do not believe that the Hurunui fishery is any more "outstanding" than many of the other rivers in the region.
4. Our farms have been partly irrigated from the Hurunui River and partly irrigated from the Waiau River for over 25 years. The difference between dry land farming and irrigation farming, in my opinion, is a wonderfully enhancing experience and also provides a benefit to the national monetary interest. Our national economy desperately needs a portion of this very precious water resource in order to continue to allow farming to be economically sustainable for those involved. Last year's nationwide drought proved how important irrigation water is to the national food chain.
5. During the 1960s and 1970s, as a dryland farmer we had been very seriously affected by drought conditions. The drought of 1970 and 1971 were the worst I can remember with our rainfall being a mere 13.52 inches for that year. A crop of wheat looking very good in October later harvested 8 bushels per acre. The mean average low flow in the Hurunui River for three and a half months during the summer of that season was 9.6 cumecs with the Hurunui River closed at the mouth. During that time of low flow I do not recall any comment being made that the fishing had become poor or there being any other environmental damage.

6. I also recall another year when 200 acres of wheat sown in autumn for harvesting was completely fed off during late winter to provide for capital stock. Drought conditions were very severe creating stress and strain not only on management skills but also within the family. Whatever option the farmer was to take, either purchasing expensive feed or selling capital stock, meant a personal economic loss for the year as well as the loss of agricultural resources for the county.
7. A good example of a irrigation scheme that has given significant benefits to the agricultural sector is the Amuri scheme which has now been distributing water for irrigation for over 20 years. It was evident right from the beginning that this irrigation scheme was going to be very successful. It was great to see farmers accepting this new challenge and understanding what irrigation water on their properties really meant and it can now be seen that the scheme has provided the benefits that were expected. The scheme has provided farmers with enough water to allow for dairy production, including growing dairy supplements, as well as cash cropping.
8. Now that the development has been completed this water resource is being utilised to its fullest potential. Our own farm has increased in size to over 1600 hectares and we now milk over 3,000 cows. The property has been divided into three farms which has provided for three of our own family to settle here along with a further 20 staff. It is wonderful to see this happening in our own district and it makes one feel very proud of our irrigation scheme and our own family.
9. This year milk production from all dairy farms within the Amuri basin resulted in over 1,000,000 litres of milk per day being processed by the local dehydration plant. In value terms based on this year's payout this amounts to \$594,000 per day. On last year's payout this would amount to over \$780,000 per day. Most of this milk is processed into many different dairy products and exported to many countries returning twice its milk value in overseas funds and taxes to the New Zealand economy. Now the Amuri basin is classified as one of the highest producing dairy areas per hectare in New Zealand and is also notable for the healthy state of the cows and quality of the milk being produced.
10. We were milking cows for 10 years before any other local farmer ventured into dairy, mainly because farmers still developing were reluctant to change from meat and wool production and their family farming life was becoming short so they decided to sell instead of completing their development. So future farm

developers came about with their own sharemilkers and the dairy conversion trend began. I believe it had to be that way to take full advantage of the irrigation water to the farming community. It is much more pleasant driving through our community now than before irrigation.

11. The Amuri Irrigation Company farmers are very satisfied and proud of their scheme, also helping to increase fish and bird life, enhancing the environment and adding beauty to the district.
12. If the design features of the Amuri Scheme in the early days had been for dairy production instead of meat and wool, the design levels of irrigation and storm water drainage could have been much more enhanced. Which it now has been during the last 3 years with a much improved water quality.
13. I am familiar with what the Hurunui Water Project are planning to develop in the upper reaches of the north and south branches of the Hurunui and in my opinion the proposal will have an enhancing effect on the amenity and intrinsic values of the area. Lake Sumner would be more stable for longer periods at the higher level allowing more natural food for fish cruising in the shallower water for fly fishermen. Also better and healthier native flora and fauna around the Lake edges. The north and south river branches would have a more stable flow also providing for better fishing and other river sports. Lake Sumner has a plentiful trout supply which will always be very productive for the North River branch. The fish are only slightly smaller now which is probably due to more pressure from fishermen.
14. The weir modification at the outlet of Lake Sumner is not a large scale structure and will have the ability to be adjusted. This will mean that Lake Sumner will no longer have such extreme low levels at times which will be a benefit to the fish life. It will also benefit those fishermen wanting to travel between Loch Katrine and Lake Sumner as the water level would always be high enough to allow passage between the lakes.
15. The wind conditions at the outlet can be very severe and have built up a high wall of rocks, shingle and waste material over hundreds of years. So there would be no problem of damage or alteration to any special values it may have. The more stable flow would also help to control Didymo and lessen its potential to become a problem.

16. In my opinion a dam on the south branch would not lessen the future salmon numbers in the total Hurunui River system for spawning. It is my opinion that later in the spawning season when the irrigation slows down the river will be controlled at a lower flow giving more areas for spawning below the dam site. This will help the Salmon fishery as many Salmon don't spawn until later April and during May.
17. I also believe that there are plenty of good spawning streams such as the Jolly Brook, Seaward, Glenna, Mandamus Cove Waitohi and Pehau which would not be effected by the project.
18. I seriously question fish and game's ability to manage the salmon fisheries when, for a number of years now, they have been allowing people to fish for salmon in the North Branch to Lake Sumner and even troll in Lake Sumner during March, April and May. In my experience by this time the salmon have travelled hundreds of kilometres are ready to spawn. The fish are black and damaged in appearance and ripe for spawning. How can you call targeting these fish sportsmanship. They are not good for eating in this state and this is a real waste for the good sporting fishermen of the future.
19. With the Amuri Plains Irrigation Scheme I believe the fish and bird life of the Hurunui River over time are now accustomed to the flow regime as it stands. The bird life on the surrounding farms and waterways has also increased as a result of the Amuri Scheme. I have often seen many birds inhabiting the irrigated farm land, such birds include: blue heron, pied stilt, spur-winged plover, pied oyster catcher, banded dotterel, paradise grey and mallard ducks in large numbers, teal spoonbill, black billed gull, black backed gull, sea pigeons, swallow, sea magpies, kingfisher, Canadian geese, quail, hawks and owls. If there is any threat to bird life it's more likely to be from stoats, ferrets and feral cats which were the problem on the farm until we started trapping them for the control of TB.
20. Since the beginning of the Amuri Scheme 24 years ago the Pahau River has never been dry. Before the irrigation scheme was implemented this River often went dry during the summer and autumn months. The whole river corridor has been cleared of willows and it now contains a very valuable fishery which no doubt supplies many fish to the Hurunui system. In evidence for Fish & Game by Mr Jellyman outlines that the Lower Hurunui River was perceived as the least impacted river in the North Canterbury Fish and Game region which was very

commendable. The Pahau is now on the fish and game licence. Ducks and other bird life surrounding the Pahau River are very plentiful, at least three times more now than before irrigation. As the Pahau River is today I believe we have a very good example of what the Waitohi River could be in future years. People have said the Waitohi is only going dry now due to farmers' bores and galleries taking water for irrigation. I do not believe this is true as my school days were spent travelling to Hawarden District High School from 1943 to 1951 which I was required to cross the Waitohi four times a day, five days a week. I can remember many times when the Waitohi River was completely dry. If a water conservation order is placed in the Hurunui this would have the effect of removing the ability to further enhance the Waitohi as has been done with Pahau.

21. My vision for when the irrigation scheme goes ahead would be to supply water permanently to the Waitohi. This could allow for the south side of the Waitohi to be developed as a permanent lake or water reserve providing sport and recreation for hunting and fishing as well as other recreational activities including a rowing course and a boat ramp. The water would have passed through the irrigation settling pond and would be settled again in the reserve. At the outfall level further down the race there could be designed spawning facilities for trout and salmon organised by the Waitohi Rod and Gun Club members and overseen by fish and game. The stream would follow down back into Waitohi and into the Hurunui system for future sports fishing. The Waitohi itself could be a wonderful and exciting recreational habitat as it has shade, shelter and road crossings. This is just one example of how the Hurunui River could be developed in conjunction with an irrigation scheme which would provide a benefit to all.

22. With the extent of the area for irrigation development and the amount of water required it is impracticable to develop on-farm storage. The cost and waste of very good fertile land would be extensive. Maybe some farmers with the right terrain could store water cheaply if it had to be a reality. The best place is on the river site and for power generation also. The Hurunui River would change for the better and ensure that future generations are able to continue to experience the values it has while also ensuring farmers and many others have a brighter future.

Dated 23 March 2009

D B Norrie