

Form 30
Submission on publicly notified application for water conservation order
or for revocation or amendment of water conservation order

Sections 205 and 216, Resource Management Act 1991

To Special Tribunal - Kawarau River Water Conservation Order

c/- Alex Miller, Ministry for the Environment,

PO Box 100362,

Wellington, 6143

Name of submitter: Erin McDermott

This is a submission on an application from New Zealand and Otago Fish and Game Councils for a water conservation order (*or* for a revocation *or* amendment of a water conservation order) for the Kawarau River which relates to its tributary, the NEVIS RIVER.

The application seeks to recognise the Nevis River's outstanding values - wild and scenic characteristics; back country fishery; natural characteristics, in particular outstanding natural landforms, trout spawning habitat; adult trout habitat (trophy trout); native fishery habitat; scientific-biogeographic river capture; historic and cultural values.

The application seeks to protect those outstanding values by adding a prohibition on damming and diversion of the river and adding a condition on water takes so as not to breach a minimum river flow.

The specific parts of the application that my submission relates to are:

I support every aspect of the proposed amendments to the present WCO as put forth by the New Zealand and Otago Fish and Game councils.

THE REASONS FOR MY SUBMISSION:

The drive accessed from the little settlement of Bannockburn follows a steep, twisty, dirt road, the land grazed by sheep and cattle is rock strewn and dotted with spaniard grasses, tussocks and a old water race used from the gold rush days still meanders around the the steep hillsides

occasionally crossing the road as you drive up. With every twist of the road a casual glance down or across is a view, to the left the old woman mountain range and on the right lets you know you are leaving the old clutha river valley which populates Cromwell and the vineyards of the Kawarau Gorge below. First time, having driven up this road you might wonder if there is an end, the old rock formations squatting in the landscape are huge and very odd shaped having worn with the winds of time set the mood of another land, many Scots say it reminds them of home.

Its not until you come to an area of the Carrack Range called 'Duffers Saddle' that the land starts to open before your eyes, the commanding presence of the Remarkable Mountain range, the isolated valley, way below in the distance, its floor nearest forms a wide flat plateau and as it heads away from your eyes gets narrower and the land undulates upwards to join the surrounding hills and mountainsides, at first glance with distance and such a commanding presence of the surrounding environment you could be forgiven at first for missing the long slither of glistening grey river twisting and cutting its way through the valley floor pushed to one side, diminutive, and seemingly significant, intoxicating, inviting to the adventurous explorers of today, peaceful and unaffected compared to the hustle and bustle of the towns half an hours drive across in the other valleys of Queenstown and Cromwell.

I first fished the Nevis River fifteen years ago as a beginner flyfisher person , I had no former knowledge of its 'secretive' reputation as a trophy class trout fishery, what had driven me to explore here was a overnight mountain bike trip I took a couple of years previous where I camped up alongside the river, so I knew it was there but had no idea where to start from, what areas of the river held more trout population, i didn't have a clue really but it was so exciting exploring this weird, unsung isolated river. It was beginners luck to capture a smaller fish upstream from the Nevis bridge that day, I was delighted, it was one of my few fish I had caught to date.

Fifteen years on I think back to that day and wonder what my reaction would have been if I had happened to have caught one of the many, elusive, large trout that lurk these same stretches of waters, the banks I clumsily walked on in eager anticipation. In some ways that would have been too easy, that day I went home, full of story, and starting asking about it around some more experienced anglers of the day.

The Nevis River has been a huge fishing adventure for me spanning many years and with it a love for this strange, lonely valley which seems to live its life caught in another time. Its beautiful, unaffected, untouched wild river which flows intermittently across flat valley lands and gorges to its exit at the Kawarau River. It provides joy to alot of people with a variety of activities from Fishing, Kayaking, Motorbikes, Mountain biking, 4WD, whether being directly involved with the river or for the pure innocence of it just existing, wild and unaffected from human development.

I usually fish this river about 10 times in a season, to me it a river that its inhabitants deserves not to be overfished, but shared.

It ticks many boxes as far as angling adventure, and a backcountry fishing experience.

Its accessible by a normal 2wd vehicle, Mountain bike, Motorbike.

Its a wild river accessible to a wide age group of anglers, who can fish to trophy sized trout.

The lower area of the river from the Nevis crossing upwards is meandering tussock land and can be easily strolled by those not so young and fit.

You don't have to hire a helicopter to find trophy trout it's a very short drive from the bustle of Queenstown to find solitude, unlike the rivers which flow into Lake Wakatipu which is usually accompanied by a lot of overhead air traffic.

It's a great river for spotting fish, it's generally clear and the size of the river makes it a manageable river to fish for a variety of people without being too intimidating.

Lots of good vegetation and bank overhangs, in-stream a variety of rocks and sandy areas, make good trout habitat, and ideal conditions for trout to live.

I am continually surprised at the aquatic bug life that lives in the river, some seasons large stonefly nymphs, to others no stonefly nymphs but lots of 'toe biters' 'creepers' or dobson fly larvae these are both large insects and like the upper Oreti with its large fish must be a huge contributor to the fish size.

From the Nevis crossing upstream is a variety of river runs, some short and deep, some long and calm, some riffly, this being characteristic of the river up from the Nevis Crossing where most of your fish are in numbers. Old gold tailings covered in rusty red moss, also line parts of the river, historical remains from a bygone year of the Otago Gold Rush, anglers trails have formed amongst the tailings the tops of the piles a perfect vantage point to spot fish down in the water. Local lizards sometimes being your only company, use these tailings as their homes.

The Gorge area above Commissioners Creek has also great fishing in the first couple of kilometers but as you get into the gorge it's a further walk to your next fish as the water is just too broken up to make great trout habitat.

Most of the fish I would catch in the area up from the Nevis crossing to Commissioners Creek average 5lb, my largest has been 8lb, I've been in the company of people who have caught 8lb, 9lb fish.

There are bigger fish which myself and my fishing friends have fished to and gone back to fish to in the next seasons which are double digit sized fish but most are very hard and cunning to catch but you try and that is what keeps you coming back is to see if it's still there to try to catch this time round. Apart from the upper Oreti which is very popular for anglers, you don't find fish like this right at your doorstep, without having to do a lot of hard footwork or have a lot of money to afford a helicopter to get you into a isolated area where otherwise you would never reach.

A couple of times at the end of the fishing season I have taken the opportunity when the water levels have been low to fish the Gorge below the Nevis crossing, this can be accessed from the Nevis Burn, being low water you have the opportunity to cross the river in a couple of areas. a bit physical as you are following goat tracks and hanging off rocks fishing in tight areas. The fishing is exciting, it's a time when fish will be on the move upstream to spawn, and you get to see just how big those fish are, it's pretty mind boggling to an angler to see fish this size, you just don't see such healthy big fish and you know they most likely won't have seen many anglers. I've only been able to hook one in here, once, and it was very memorable.

I assume these fish live in the gorge areas below the crossing and would make their way

upstream to spawn in the shallower waters and finer gravels, these fish were well into double figures and are vitally important as spawning fish to the Nevis any dam structure is definitely going to devastate the trout population of the Nevis absolutely ruin it.

It would be imperative to the fish population and fish quality, fishing experience, that these huge fish are not hindered by human obstructions in this case dams they have no place in a special area like the Nevis valley.

We do not need another featureless lake to fish around this is very boring and static...its static fishing compared to walking up a river spotting fish. River fishing is very evolving and involving to a fisherperson.

I feel this river and valley desperately needs to be preserved for future generations to enjoy as it is, wild, naturally evolving by nature, not human interference.

It seems pointless to ruin this river for such little power generation I believe this will produce, its such a tiny river to pick on for power generation, it is totally frivolous, waste of time, destruction for destruction sake, for gods sake go and silence a river that does not have such high natural values, or improve on the electricity generation on the rivers youve already damed.

Once a dam goes in here the valley changed and I believe in this case not for the good, we need to preserve some areas and the Nevis River Valley is a very special place which has yet to be recognised and discovered by alot of people, unfortunately it has been to hidden for its own good, and with this I am wholly behind Fish and Game amendment to the water conservation order for the Kawarau to include the Nevis River. I believe this river is one of the characteristics of the Nevis Valley which need to be protected.

I seek the following decision from the special tribunal:

To recognise those outstanding values of the Nevis River identified by Fish and Game in the Application.

To add a prohibition on damming and diversion of the river and to add minimum river flow conditions to protect the river.

I wish to be heard in support of my submission

Erin McDermott

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Date

(A signature is not required if you make your submission by electronic means.)

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Note to submitter

You must serve a copy of your submission on the applicant as soon as reasonably practicable after you have served your submission on the special tribunal.

The special tribunal may require you to provide further information on your submission.