

25 September 2008

Special Tribunal – Kawarau River Water Conservation Order
C/- A Miller
Ministry for the Environment
PO Box 10362
Wellington 6143

Dear Sir

Submission on Application from the New Zealand and Otago Fish and Game Councils – Amendment to the Kawarau River Conservation Order.

My Name is: Kenneth David McGraw

Specifically the Fish and Game application relates to protection of the outstanding values of the Nevis River through addition of a prohibition on abstraction from and damming of the Nevis River flow, and adding a condition that ensures water takes, existing and future, do not breach a minimum flow for the river.

Following a study of amendments sought by the New Zealand and Otago Fish and Game Councils to the existing Kawarau River Conservation Order and in applying my knowledge of the Nevis River and the valley in which it is situated, I believe the application contains sound rational that ensures future protection of the very special and unique values the Nevis River and valley possesses.

I value the remote angling and visual experience provided by the Nevis River very highly and in wishing to ensure future personal experiences and those of future generations of anglers, other river and recreational users are not degraded through exploitation for hydroelectric generation including damming and abstraction or loss of the present minimum flow regime that permanently sustains the river ecosystem I support the application with regard to 5.3(a) damming and 5.3(c) abstraction.

Reasons for Support

I have three primary reasons that form the basis to my support of the application to amend the Kawarau River Conservation Order.

These are:

1. Outstanding trophy trout fishery.
2. Outstanding landscape values.
3. Unmodified natural river system.

Supporting Detail

1. Outstanding Trophy Trout fishery.

I have no hesitation in defining my trips into the Nevis Valley for angling experiences as a privilege and of being immensely proud to share those experiences in such a breath taking environment with visiting friends.

I have been visiting this area over the past 12 years for angling and pick nicks, and messing about the historic gold mining sites or to just simply enjoy the feeling of being in an area of such outstanding beauty.

My view to the quality of the brown trout angling provided by the river are that it continues to remain forever. However, in saying that I believe Fish and Game Otago will need to accept that the river is now under significantly more angling pressure than it was some five to eight years ago and seriously consider a separate management and licence regime for outstanding rivers classified as providing unique “back country” experiences such as the Nevis River is.

In my experience most river systems in Otago that are classified as “back country” tend to be fragile in terms of fish numbers, salmonoids, galaxids and native species included. Habitat, quality of terrestrial insect life, macroinvertebrates and spawning environments are key to sustaining those numbers.

I believe sustainability of the Nevis River ecosystem is such that any manmade interference with the daily mean flow regime would have catastrophic impacts on the rivers ecosystem.

Abstraction and damming of the natural flow are the absolute opposite to each other in terms of effect.

Abstraction when measured in the context of irrigation or other commercial take is a direct reduction in river benefits to provide a direct commercial benefit in isolation to the abstraction source. In other words abstraction equals a net loss to the river ecosystem.

Damming on the other hand is opposite to abstraction in that the main purpose of a dam is storage to provide a working head to drive equipment such as hydroelectric turbines.

Although a dam stores for latter controlled release, negative impacts on ecosystems that have been inundated by the storage process are as devastating as those resulting from abstraction.

The forming of a dam over a valley floor such as the Nevis would totally devastate the unmodified free flowing river system forever changing it to a Stillwater environment with excessive fluctuating levels.

Other negatives are irregular flooding of the tributary streams where trout spawning environments and a range of native species exist. As the migration of trout from the Kawarau River into the Nevis River is virtually impossible due to the steep gradient and broken water nature of the section of river where it flows through the lower gorge

the present outstanding angling experience provided depends on protection of the existing available spawning areas to provide recruitment of juvenile trout stock to ensure the high quality back country angling experience remains. Loss of the present spawning habitat would simply mean the outstanding quality trout fishery and back country angling experience would cease to exist.

2. Outstanding Landscape Values

The Nevis Valley is simply breathtaking so much so, that I believe a blind person would feel its natural power and beauty on entering the valley.

This beauty is part of the range of values I treasure and do not wish to be altered through any future damming or diversion of the river that dominates the valley floor.

A definite factor that adds to the uniqueness of the Nevis Valley is that it is the only valley in Otago that has such outstanding natural beauty, landform and remoteness is that it is accessible to ordinary people by simply using the average family car.

This ease of access is also within a one hour journey of Cromwell.

Enjoyment of similarly beautiful valley's classified as outstanding back country experiences in Otago such as the Caples and Greenstone is only available to extremely fit people or those able to afford the luxury of launch or helicopter charter.

3. Unmodified Natural River System

The Nevis River is a key part of the landscape of the valley. Although parts of the valley floor have been cultivated for pastoral use this is not significant and is largely overwhelmed by the scale and beauty of the single thread meandering river.

The Nevis River is a rare example of a free flowing unmodified river form consisting of a series of stable pool, run, ripple sequence that sits in complete harmony with the surrounding outstanding land form and the scenic values of the valley.

Although the valley floor and river was subjected to major disturbance through the gold mining period the river some 80-100 year ago, recovery has been remarkable in that little or no remnants of disturbance to the river system is now visible.

The starkness of the valley adds to the largely unmodified landscape. Current low intensity pastoral activities within the valley I believe fit well with the environment and do not detract from the back country experience or outstanding and unique recreational values provided by the area.

Loss of a large part of the valley floor, river and tributary streams would completely ruin those values and detract significantly from the present recreational value of the river.

Summary

In summary I ask that abstraction from and/or damming of the Nevis River be prohibited to protect the following:

- Special and unique nature of the Nevis River as a wild and scenic trout fishery of outstanding quality and offering a unique back country angling experience.
- Instream habitat values
- Outstanding land form and natural characteristics of the Nevis Valley
- Recreational values

Specifically **I support** the following parts of the Application by New Zealand Fish and Game Council and Otago Fish and Game Council to amend the Water Conservation (Kawarau River) Order 1997 in respect of the Nevis River:

Amendments Sought (5.3)

- a. Adding a prohibition on damming on the Nevis River
- c. Adding a prohibition on taking water from the Nevis River or imposing a minimum flow.

I seek the following decision from the special tribunal:

1. To recognize those outstanding values of the Nevis River and Nevis Valley identified by Fish and Game in the application and;
2. To add a prohibition on damming of the Nevis River and;
3. To add a prohibition on taking water from the Nevis River.

Note: I do wish to be heard in support of my submission

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Nevis CO ammendments