



The Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ (Inc)

P O Box 1604
WELLINGTON
www.fmc.org.nz

secretary@fmc.org.nz

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Special Tribunal – Kawarau River Water Conservation Order

c/- Alex Miller, Ministry for the Environment,
PO Box 10362,
Wellington 6143

Submission on an application for an amendment to the Kawarau River Water Conservation Order

This is a submission on an application from New Zealand and Otago Fish and Game Councils for an amendment to the 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 trout 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.

We support the whole application

Our submission is that we support the proposed amendments to the order both to recognise those outstanding values mentioned above and to add a prohibition on damming and diversion of the river and conditions on minimum river flow.

The reasons for our submission:

FMC has over 100 member clubs which represent some 15000 members of tramping, mountaineering, climbing and other outdoor clubs throughout NZ, and indirectly represents the interests and concerns of many thousands of private individuals who may not currently be members of clubs but who enjoy recreation in the back country.

The recreational values of this area for our members can be divided into 3 groups:

1. Skiing, off track tramping and mountaineering on the ranges on either side of the Nevis valley. These are sites where the remoteness and lack of visible human-created features are keys to the recreational experience. If visible from the ranges, the creation of dams, reservoirs and associated infrastructure would irrevocably alter the type of experience sought in these areas.

2. Short walks and informal camping in the valley. Again, remoteness and the absence of large scale 'built' features are the attractions. In addition, the opportunity to explore the relics of the gold-mining era is a key highlight of visiting the Nevis. Inundation of parts of the valley floor would destroy these features for ever.
3. Gorge travel. A descent of the Nevis Gorge on foot is a challenging and committing journey requiring a high degree of skill and self reliance. Those who venture there experience a sense of remoteness and a landscape that belies its proximity to roads at either end. There are few such gorges which combine these attributes with accessibility and the unique Central Otago landscape.

In addition to tramping, mountaineering, walking and skiing, many of our members are also keen mountain bikers, fishermen and kayakers. The recreational values of all of these activities will also be compromised by development on the river.

We take issue with the oft-repeated assertion that hydro-electric generation is 'sustainable' or 'renewable'. While the raw material, water, is renewable, hydro-electric generation totally and irrevocably alters the river, its landscape and its eco-systems. The total output of a hydro-electric scheme on the Nevis has been stated to be 45MW. This small output would only be achieved at the high price of the total loss of a magnificent wild river.

We 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.

We do not wish to be heard in support of my submission.

Phil Glasson
Secretary
(Submitted electronically)

1 October 2008