

11 February 2014

For Westpower Ltd.
Attention: Sue Cotton, Consultation Officer

Peer review by Dave Bamford of TRC Tourism Ltd. of the Westpower Waitaha Hydro Investigations, Recreation and Tourism Assessment of Effects, by Rob Greenaway Associates, Version 5, February 2014.

Introduction

This review is the result of:

- a desk top review of the Waitaha Recreation and Tourism effects report – version 5;
- a site visit with Gavin Lister, landscape advisor and Sue Cotton of Westpower on January 24th, 2014. This included assessing the Waitaha Catchment and a visit to the Westpower Amethyst Hydro scheme. The visibility for the field visit was good;
- a statutory check of key issues;
- a review of key components of the report.

A key focus of the peer review, in addition to the 6 points below, was to cross check the executive summary with the main report. No issues in this regard were identified. I refer readers to the 10 page executive summary for a comprehensive summary of the report by Greenaway.

The assessment

a) Description of the existing environment, recreational and tourism values.

The Waitaha recreation resources and their management are accurately and unemotionally described. Where needed, recreational guide books are quoted. Current recreational use is described in detail. The kayaking and tramping sections are particularly extensive. The field visit confirmed that, whilst the Waitaha Catchment from Macgregor Creek and including the Morgan Gorge is remote and difficult to access on foot, the Morgan Gorge itself is quite short – approximately 1 kilometre (abstraction reach is approx. 2.6km).

Greenaway clearly outlines the importance of recreation to the Waitaha Catchment and concludes (page 7 and 8) that the kayaking resource is likely to be of sufficient interest to off-shore paddlers, and to be of international significance to highly advanced kayakers, as part of the West Coast kayaking complex. The Waitaha Valley is also:

- Internationally and nationally significant for extreme kayaking (Morgan Gorge, upper Waitaha Gorge) and high grade kayaking (Waitaha Gorge) as part of the West Coast kayaking complex;
- Regionally significant in the lower valley (Kiwi Flat area) for tramping but nationally significant in the upper valley, particularly at Ivory Lake. Low use throughout;
- Regionally significant for hunting;



- Regionally significant for hot springs in the Morgan Gorge (mostly an element of the tramping and kayaking experience but identified as a specific destination by some visitors);
- Regionally significant for angling (lower River only, outside Scheme footprint);
- Locally significant for jet boating (lower River only, outside Scheme footprint).

I concur with these findings.

b) Identification and description of the nature of the proposed development.

The Greenaway report more than adequately describes the scheme and the proposed operating scheme (section 2, pages 13-15). The use of the weir location option review usefully assesses the effects of both options on the key recreational activities (kayaking, hunting and tramping).

c) Identification of anticipated effects on recreation and tourism. Have all the relevant effects been considered? Has the significance of effects been interpreted correctly?

Greenaway effectively uses 5 rankings of the effect of the proposed scheme on recreational activities. These range from nil and include nil, low, moderate, high and significant (section 7.3, page 61).

Greenaway is clear that, in his opinion, there is a high impact of the proposed scheme on those using the Morgan Gorge, a section of the river used by trampers and the few kayakers who portage the gorge. He is thorough in assessing the recreational affects in section 7.3, pages 60-65.

d) Has the assessment identified matters relevant to statutory documents including the Regional Policy Statement, District Plans, Conservation Act, CMS and the RMA?

Greenaway addresses the statutory Planning Provisions in section 7.1 and 7.5.1. In particular he discusses the West Coast Te Tai Poutini Conservation Management Strategy, the RMA 1991 and the regional and district plans prepared under the RMA.

He comments in 7.5.1 (page 68) that: “the effects of the Scheme relevant to the RMA (including sections 6 and 7) are on the internationally and nationally significant status of kayaking opportunities on the river, although this scale relates as much to the West Coast complex of kayaking opportunities as it does to the values of any single river.”

I assume that all statutory requirements will be addressed by the Westpower planning process.

e) Identification of proposed recreational mitigation, options considered and recommendations.

Greenaway is thorough, and more than adequate in describing mitigation options. These are detailed in the executive summary pages 8 -10 and the main report, section 7.2 pages 59-61 and section 7.4 pages 66-68.

f) Does the overall conclusion reflect the findings of the assessment?

The conclusion notes that the Waitaha Catchment's primary recreational value is its high-quality white water and back country-remote characteristics. For both values, the Waitaha Catchment contributes to a large West Coast back country-remote setting.

He comments that whilst mitigations are available to reduce the scale of effects on kayaking (ceases to abstraction and improved portage tracks), the change from a natural state waterway means that the final effect on kayaking on the Waitaha River remains 'high'.


He assesses the net effect on the West Coast kayaking scene is likely to be minor.

This statement is likely to be debated by those kayakers who perceive that the Waitaha proposal does have an adverse regional impact. I concur with Mr Greenaway's findings. His findings are supported by the findings of his assessment.

Greenaway's conclusion of the effects on trampers, hunters, anglers and jet boaters is more than adequate.

Conclusion

This is a thorough report that builds on good research, including extensive use of secondary research (Appendix 2, 3, 4, 5) and consultation since 2008 (including the Booth report, Appendix 1). The report requires no alterations.



Dave Bamford
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