



29 November 2003

Katie Jameson
National Rivers Officer
Jet Boating New Zealand
PO Box 339
Christchurch

Dear Katie.

Jet Boat Access to the Buller River and Tributaries

Thank you for your undated reply to my earlier letter.

My earlier letter does not make it clear that we understand Jet Boating NZ has applied to uplift the speed restriction for the Buller above the Mangles River confluence and the tributaries. NZRCA, however, understands this fact completely and is still opposed to your application as outlined below.

JBNZ does not appear to realise the importance of the entire Buller catchment to kayakers. As detailed in my earlier letter, with evidence supporting the creation of the Buller Water Conservation Order, the Buller River and its tributaries are amongst the most valued rivers in New Zealand, and definitely in the South Island.

Your letter goes to great lengths to assure us that members of JBNZ will respect the safety and interests of kayakers. You make no mention of jet boaters who are not members of JBNZ. It will obviously become common knowledge amongst the jet boating population that the entire Buller River and its tributaries could be jet boated if the speed restriction was uplifted. You make no mention of how to mitigate the effects of jet boaters who are not members of JBNZ, who may not be aware that kayakers even use the Buller River or its tributaries.

The major issue when kayakers and jet boats share a watercourse is safety. Your letter only increases our concerns in this regard. The 'Rules of the Road' document that you included is laughably inadequate in relation to kayakers. It is patently obvious that there was no consultation with kayakers regarding the production of this document.

This document does raise one interesting point. It indicates that a jet boat must not exceed 5 knots if you are within 50 metres of any other boat. The major safety concern we have is that kayakers will often be invisible to jet boaters. As indicated in my earlier letter, hydraulic features in the river such as waves will often obscure kayakers. This means that a jet boater can never be sure that they are more than 50 metres from a kayak, and therefore must always travel at less than 5 knots.

Your letter indicates that jet boaters are always on the lookout for other vehicles and trailers at launch sites on riverbanks. This statement indicates a total ignorance of how kayakers use rivers. Kayakers do not use boat ramps. We virtually always access rivers by walking a distance to the river. Often we access or leave the river at points where we are required to clamber up or down a bank to the river.



Your letter states, "It is unlikely that more than a few boats on an occasional basis will be boating this piece of river. The isolation and variable river conditions mean that the opportunities are very limited." This statement is the very antithesis of how kayakers use the Buller River and its tributaries. Opportunities for kayakers are unlimited. For kayakers the rivers offer excellent kayaking for people of all abilities, and the access to these rivers is very easy.

The JBNZ website indicates that the Buller River from Lake Rotoiti to Lyell is graded in difficulty as Class 3 and 4. According to your website, the Class 4 sections (Lake Rotoiti to Homestead Creek and Murchison to Lyell) are unable to be boated, and the Class 3 sections (Homestead Creek to Owen Junction and Owen Junction to Murchison) can only be boated by skilled operators. These river sections offer excellent kayaking for people ranging from beginners to experts.

Your application appears to be the same as kayakers applying for the speed restriction to be reintroduced to the Wilkin or Hunter River so that a couple of kayakers can use these rivers very occasionally.

Once again I reiterate that NZRCA sees JBNZ's proposal as a major threat to kayaking in the Buller region. The Association is opposed to the uplifting of the 5-knot speed restriction on the Buller River upstream of the Mangles River confluence and its tributaries.

Yours sincerely,
NZ Recreational Canoeing Association

Glenn Murdoch
Safety Officer

Cc: Graeme Caradus, Harbour Master, Tasman District Council, Nelson.
Mick Hopkinson, NZ Kayak School, Murchison.
Lawson Davey, Fish & Game Officer, Fish & Game, Nelson / Marlborough.
Russell Kilvington, Director of Maritime Safety Authority.
John Marshall, Maritime Safety Authority.
Paul Swain, Minister of Transport
Harry Duynhoven, Associate Minister of Transport
Judith Tizard, Associate Minister of Transport
Jill Dalton, President, NZ Outdoor Instructors Association
Ron Wastney, Nelson Canoe Club
Trevor James, Westland Canoe Club
Damien O'Connor, MP for West Coast / Tasman
Nick Smith, National Member for Nelson